

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation - Women's seminar held at Padmaloka on May 1982

The Motive and the Working Basis - Chapters One and Two

Present: Sangharakshita, Dhammadinna, Anjali, Vajrasuri, Vajrapushpa, Jenny Roche, Gay Voller, Glynis Brown, Megha, Debbie Seamer, Annie Fowler, Linda Moody, Rosy Anderson, Marion Monas, Greta Thomas, Rosie Ong, Kay Tremaine, Annie Murphy, Paula Turner, Daphne Luce, Dawn Bouic.

"Since all beings are endowed with Buddha-nature, do the other five forms of existence such as denizens of hell, spirits and the like, have the power to attain Buddhahood? No. The expression 'precious human body' means the body representing a unique occasion and effecting the right juncture and mind possessing three kinds of confidence. There are auspicious resources in an individual who is the working basis for the attainment of Buddhahood. The following may guide you:

Five headings relate to the excellent working basis:

Unique occasion, right juncture, Trust, longing and lucidity. The former two belong to the body, the latter three to mind."

S: First of all, let's just look at this expression: 'the most precious human body'. What does that suggest?

Marion: It's difficult to attain.

Dawn: We're lucky that we have one.

S: Yes, we're lucky that we have one - it's difficult to attain, but even more than that - I mean in a general sense.

Voice: You ought to value it, look after it.

S: You ought to value it, yes. But in very general terms what sort of attitude, what kind of attitude to the body is implied here? (Voice: Positive) It's a very positive, a very appreciative attitude. I emphasize this point because this isn't perhaps the way in which we always look at the body, certainly in the West and possibly as a result of your Christian or post-Christian, or ex-Christian background. But according to the Buddhist tradition 'the most precious human body' the human body is like a precious vase which is capable of containing [2] the elixir of immortality. This is how Buddhists traditionally look on it. So the working basis is the most precious human body. What that means we shall see exactly in a minute. So the text says: "Since all beings are endowed with Buddha-nature, do the other five forms of existence such as denizens of hell, spirits and the like, have the power to attain Buddhahood? No. The expression 'precious human body' means the body representing a unique occasion and effecting the right juncture and mind possessing three kinds of confidence. There are auspicious resources in an individual who is the working basis for the attainment of Buddhahood."

So this precious human body is not just a physical body not just any human physical body. Hm? Do you see the point? It's a special kind of body in a way. "The expression 'precious human body' means the body representing a unique occasion and effecting the right juncture and mind possessing three kinds of confidence." What these are, we shall see, in a moment. In other words, "There are auspicious resources in an individual who is the working basis for the attainment of Buddhahood."

An individual who is not a working basis for the attainment of Buddhahood doesn't possess these auspicious resources. So the point is summarized in the first of those "five headings relate to the excellent working basis: Unique occasion, right juncture, trust, longing and lucidity". These are, of course, the three kinds of confidence mentioned in the first paragraph. "The former two belong to the body" - that is to say the physical body, i.e. unique occasion, right juncture - "the latter three" - trust, longing and lucidity, the three kinds of confidence or the three kinds of faith - "to the mind". So this is just the table of contents, so to speak, for this chapter. So we now have to go into each of these in turn: What is the unique occasion; what is the right juncture? What does one mean by trust, longing and lucidity? In this way we shall come to an understanding of the working basis, i.e. the most precious human body.

All right, I'd like to carry on:

Jenny (Gunabhadri): "'Unique occasion' means to be free from the eight unfavourable conditions, listed in the 'Saddharma-smṛtyupasthāna':

Denizens of hell, spirits, animals,
Members of the border tribes, long-living Gods,
Those with erroneous views and those born in a period where there is no Buddha
And the stupid. These represent the eight unfavourable conditions."

[3]

S: So unique occasion means to be free from the eight unfavourable conditions, and what are these? Denizens of hell - to be born as a denizen of hell is an unfavourable condition To be born as a Preta is an unfavourable condition; to be born as an animal; to be born as a member of a border tribe. What does that mean? Or what does that suggest?

Voice: Is that the Asuras?

S: No, it's not the Asuras.

Vajrapushpa: The distant and the uncivilized areas.

S: Yes, this suggests - this is quite interesting, that some degree of culture, some degree of civilization is necessary as the basis of the spiritual life. You can't go directly, as it were, from a state of barbarism and savagery to the spiritual life. Culture, civilization provide you with a sort of refinement. Do you see what I mean? They constitute a sort of intermediate stage, between the animal-like life of those who are savage and barbarous and the more refined life the more emotionally refined life, perhaps of those who have perhaps reached a definite stage of civilization and culture. Do you see this point? Of course, we have to be careful how we understand 'culture' perhaps. I think it has been recently, more widely acknowledged that a lot of peoples that formerly, at least in the last century were considered primitive or backward, have in fact quite an advanced culture. And quite an advanced spiritual tradition, even. Do you see what I mean? So one should be very careful one doesn't consider people uncultured or backward simply because they don't possess various modern amenities or don't have a civilization which is based on technology.

It seems, for instance, that the aborigines of Australia, have a definite cultural and spiritual tradition. This formerly was not appreciated. They were simply considered 'backward'. Similarly with the Red Indian tribes in Canada and the United States.

Dhammadinna: Quite often primitive or backward is being decided by Christian missionary culture.

S: Yes, indeed! Christian missionary culture and technological culture.

Dhammadinna: They didn't actually look to see if there was anything [4] worthwhile in those traditions.

S: Yes, right. So members of border tribes are people living in a state of genuine barbarism and savagery. Their customs are very brutal, there's a lot of cruelty and harsh treatment of one another. Maybe not a very developed language. On the other hand, one is not necessarily cultured or even civilized, just because you're surrounded by all the latest technological gadgets. You can still be very barbarous and even very savage.

Dhammadinna: How developed was the culture in Tibet when Buddhism went there? Because they sounded like quite a wild people in one sense but presumably there was cultural development.

S: Well, to begin with, it was very difficult to live in Tibet at all. It was a very harsh and a very bleak sort of environment. So the Tibetans grew up as a sort of very sturdy people, able to bear quite a lot of hardship, quite a lot of suffering. So perhaps from the standpoint of other peoples or in the eyes of other peoples, they were a bit hard on one another even - maybe parents were hard on their children even. Mothers even hard on their babies, but that was because they were accustomed to a much harsher way of living than perhaps we are. Nonetheless, even before Buddhism, they did have a very advanced spiritual culture, in Shamanism - a lot of which was incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism. They were certainly not uncultured in the sense of being devoid of spiritual ideas or spiritual traditions. Civilization and culture don't necessarily imply luxury or having a high standard of living, materially speaking. Sometimes the two go together, but not necessarily so.

Vajrasuri: I sometimes feel the changes in (our involvement) - kind of psychic - magic - and not spiritual - not evolution ...

S: Perhaps that raises the question of 'what does one mean by spiritual'?

Vajrasuri: More governed by fear than formed by expansion.

S: Well, certainly there is an element of that in many of these traditions but then one might say, "well, primitive man had cause for fear in the sense that he's surrounded by the forces of nature unable to control them - unable to keep them at bay, even". I mean [5] we're afraid of the Atom Bomb. Well, we're perfectly right to be afraid of the Atom Bomb or Nuclear Bomb or whatever. We have unleashed those forces in our technological ... and they were afraid of a storm and wind and hurricane and drought and so on and sometimes they believed that these things could be dealt with by magical means. I'm not so sure they can't be, on some occasions. I mean, I have known 'rain-making-Lamas' and they explained how it's done. It seems to work. Though they did admit that it was more difficult, they said, to cause rain to fall when there were no rain clouds about than it was to stop rain falling when there were rain clouds about. (Laughter)

There's another point: sometimes I think, looking at things from a Western point of view, we interpret as magic, what is in fact, spiritual. Yes? For instance - there are examples even in the life of the Buddha. There are these myths in some of the scriptures about the Buddha, emitting fire and water simultaneously from his body and walking up and down in the air. Well, it's represented in terms of a magical performance - what else are we going to call it? But is that really its significance? I mean, whether it happened or whether it didn't - I mean if it did happen or whether it didn't, then what was its significance? Its significance was not magical. It was expressed in Magical terms, but presumably what the Buddha or what the author of the myth - if it didn't really happen - was concerned with was to represent a sort of union of the opposites: -

Earth and Fire, also Water and Fire, also artist, also producing them from your body at the same time - you know, showers of water and streams of water and at the same time fire. Well, [what] does it mean? Well, you've unified these two opposites in your own personality, in an alchemical sort of way almost. So one is not really so much concerned with magic as with a spiritual teaching.

So I think in the case of Shamanism, very often the teaching assumed this magical form but had in fact a spiritual content. You see what I mean?

Marion: It's a bit like alchemy in the West.

S: Yes, I mean, sometimes people were preoccupied with alchemical operations in the literal sense but they were a sort of basis for a deeper understanding, knowing they were symbols for an alchemical philosophy. So I think the same way with Buddhism when they speak of a journey up into the sky or that sort of thing - well it isn't really a literal journey up into a literal sky. They're really talking about, in a sense, to recall in more abstract language, the higher [6] level of being, a higher level of consciousness and so on. They put it in much more concrete, in much more mythic or magical terms.

Vajrapushpa: Of course, it can also be used for psychological purposes.

S: Yes, yes. That's not to say that it may not also offer it on the magical level as magic.

Dhammadinna: What do you mean by the word 'magic'?

S: Well magic usually means, sort of 'wonder-working', doesn't it? It's more like a power - the Buddha's power supposedly appeared producing fire and water simultaneously from his body. Walking up and down in the air.

Vajrasuri: A unification of energies.

S: Mm. Well, that's what it represents or symbolizes, you could say. Anyway, how did we get on to that? All sorts of strange ... (Voices: Border tribes, culture and Shamanism) Oh yes, Border tribes and cultural levels ...

Rosie A: The eight unfavourable conditions - one of the 8 unfavourable conditions.

S: Anyway, I was simply trying to say that when we speak of Border tribes and a higher or a lower level of civilization and culture, we must know what we're talking about. We must understand what 'culture' really means; what 'civilization' really means. And not think that because people are backward or primitive technologically, that they therefore have no culture or no civilization.

Dhammadinna: So you mean that any kind of society with an openness to something higher, could be cultured in this sense?

S: Yes, and also when their ordinary life was affected by that, to some extent. I mean, it would be difficult to imagine, say, a people which was really barbaric in the sense that they didn't value human life very highly at the same time being open to a higher spiritual dimension.

Rosie Ong: Do you mean spiritual in the sense of psychological?

S: No, we're going beyond that.

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Vajrasuri: What about occult? The 'occult' and magic?

S: You mean the o-c-c-u-l-t? Well magic is concerned in a way with the occult. The occult means the hidden, the secret. Magic operates presumably by manipulating, by taking advantage of the so-called hidden powers of nature, powers of the mind. In that way one can describe magic as occult. There is a term 'occultism' which is favoured in some circles, which is a sort of study, a quasi-scientific philosophical study of the hidden forces which is for instance, the properties of nature and of natural things.

Dhammadinna: But certainly in Western society, the difference between cultured and uncultured is not so much that there's a region where there's lack of culture and region where there's culture, it's almost like - it's very mixed. On a certain level, you live with a certain group of people, that might not be cultured. Do you see what I mean? It's almost as if there are things open to you but they're not open to everybody (S: Yes) You know, some people live on the level of bar rooms on Saturday night and football on Tuesday and Strip clubs and other people in the same geographical area are doing completely different things.

S: Yes, your border tribes are scattered among your own relations. (Laughter) Well football supporters seem like 'border tribes' as far as I can see - the simplest way of regarding it. Perhaps they do have their own very primitive culture. They wear 'favours' on their coat and the colours of their team, etc. etc. They sort of set up with their little cheers and all that sort of thing. Well, I suppose it's a form of music. (Laughter) They even do 'war dances' on occasion - I believe - they have ritual chases of their rival supporters and all that sort of thing - ritual smashing up of (Loud laughter) which is a rather primitive form of culture, here - a real sort of barbaric and savage sense ...

Vajrasuri: I feel quite excited in that form of group - energy and power ...

Dhammadinna: In those countries where it's difficult to practise the Dharma, the Communist countries or some Catholic countries or the Muslim countries, would they come into this category?

S: Well, I suppose yes - even though they have technology and [8] ...

Dhammadinna: ... even though they have some form of culture?

S: ... even though they have technology and all that sort of thing, from a Buddhist point of view - well, these are tribal - these are border tribes, partly in between the actual jungle and real civilization. No doubt, through the arts - one must be fair - there's a certain amount of culture, yes - even in the Soviet Union - even in Catholic countries but it certainly does have its limits.

Dhammadinna: They put some ceiling on how far you can go.

S: Yes, unless you're a very exceptional individual - it breaks through, so to speak - (under it's sort of own steam). But as far as the question nowadays, what does one mean by being a member of a border tribe?

Paula: Lyall Watson describes football or playing football as going right back to the cave-man, to the hunter and almost the hunted and ... (Laughter)

S: Well, I'll have to go and see a football match (Laughter). I've never seen a football match in my life, apart from one or two that we had on a 'convention' - (Laughter) - rather to the boredom of the Upasikas.

Dhammadinna: They didn't have their own hockey sticks along (Laughter).

S: There were the Upasikas walking around in a perfectly lady-like manner - and these Upasakas in a football pitch, kicking balls and playing games, like - No, I won't say like what! (Laughter - "go on!") Anyway, they weren't allowed to do it on a subsequent occasion - some one came along and took away the ball or something (Laughter).

Voice: We had a football match between Aryatara and Sukhavati and the others were (funkies at the side) didn't they -'you can't do that!' (S: - a humorous remark - inaudible)

S: Anyway, this is quite a question from a spiritual point of view, the kind of cultural environment into we're born. Whether it is a culture which is open with regard to the possibility of higher spiritual development. I mean, say, if you were born in Soviet Russia in a small town in Soviet Russia today, there probably wouldn't be [9] many spiritual outlets. You would certainly find it very difficult to have access to Buddhist literature there is state sponsored, anti-religious propaganda. What are you to do if you are born into an area where many books are banned? or you're not even allowed to know that they exist.

Linda: It's interesting that apparently a lot of books are being banned apparently in America because of the 'Born-again Christian ... (S: Banned in what sense?) Banned by being removed from the libraries and not being allowed to be taught in the schools (S: Ah!) Things like Mark Twain which is part of the great American tradition ... Well, because Huckleberry Finn is the great American archetypal folk hero but it's not at all Christian.

S: What's wrong with Huckleberry Finn?

Linda: Well, he's not a Christian!

Dhammadinna: It's quite serious, it's happening on quite a wide scale. What's it called? It's not just the 'Born-again Christian' name it's called the ... It's got a special name, doesn't it?

S: "Librarians for Christ"! - Laughter) The "Moral Majority", that's it. It's a very strong movement in America.

Linda: The Fundamentalists - they took the Evolutionists to court just recently and luckily they didn't win the case because they wanted all the Darwin stuff out of the schools. They nearly won but they didn't.

Dhammadinna: So that would definitely include all Buddhist books if it includes things like Huckleberry Finn.

S: Well, I was aware of this even before Manjувajra and Vajradaka and Punya went to the States. In fact I think I warned them that Christianity in the States was more strongly established than it is in this country. Despite there being no established religion officially in a sense - but church-going seems much more the rule there and Fundamentalist Christianity, I think, is quite strong. In a sense we are up against that and will be up against that - even comparatively fringe sects like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses are very much more prominent than they are in this country.

Dhammadinna: The 'Born-again' Christian movement is getting quite strong in [10] New Zealand as well. (Megha: Yes)

S: Perhaps we have to take more militant sort of stance.

Megha: How do you mean?

S: Well, in India I had the reputation of being 'the enemy of the church' which was what the Christian missionaries called me. So perhaps I had something to live up to there (Laughter) The difficulty is of course, that in India, is that all the minorities tend to group together, for protection against the Hindu majority so Christians and Muslims are quite friendly towards Buddhists in India just because they're fellow minorities. But perhaps in this country perhaps in the States or New Zealand one just has to be much more outspoken. I did upset quite a few people in New Zealand, in Australia - by what they thought of as my anti-Christian attitude. Which meant that I didn't accept Christianity and I regarded it as not being the same teaching as Buddhism and therefore for me to accept Buddhism was not to accept Christianity. Even though, yes, in the Bible, in the New Testament are sayings that one can accept but the system as a whole - the whole conception of - the whole conception of salvation, one cannot possibly accept if one is a Buddhist. And not only that, but one must reject it as actually harmful to human beings as having exercised a very bad influence in history - very harmful even. I have found that there is quite a lot of early Rationalist literature dealing with Christianity and so on - it's almost impossible to get these things now. You have to hunt for them in second hand book shops. They're nearly all out of print - they're all of them, practically all out of print and I've noticed that the sort of Christian version of events is becoming more and more standard and more and more generally accepted in all sort of fields. Do you see what I mean? You can buy histories of Christianity which give you no idea, for instance of what the Inquisition did or what the Crusades were really like. It's all glossed over - even, I tell you, the Encyclopedia Britannica - a lot of it has been re-written since - it's now being published in the States, in Chicago, yeah? If you look up for instance the article, the Albigensians, what the Church did is glossed over. So we are being denied access, really in effect, to information. Our minds are being made up for us, on certain issues. In reading some of these entries, for instance about the Albigensians, you are given the impression almost that the Church was justified in taking the action that it did. Because the [11] Albigensians, because the Cathars were threatening to subvert the whole moral order of society. They were anti-social. That is the impression that is given. The authorities were justified in taking the action that they did against them - that there was a bit of bloodshed, well, that was unfortunate. Too bad! That's the attitude. Yeah?

I've been reading a more objective history of the Popes by an early Rationalist - he says frankly that a certain Pope was a drunkard - an alcoholic - that does not appear in the official Catholic histories of the (dynasties)- they remain silent about such things. They even nowadays gloss the part they played just by Pope Pius XII, during the Great War - his well-known sympathy for the Nazis and for Nazism - that's all glossed over.

Vajrasuri: That's history being re-written, isn't it?

S: Yes it is.

Annie F: 1984! It's started!

S: Anyway, we're going a little bit off the track. We're really talking about border countries and the sort of areas in which one doesn't - or an Englishman would not like to be reborn in if one wanted to keep on the Buddhist Path.

Marion: Do you think there's a tendency for barbarism to overtake civilization ...?

S: That does seem so because look at the history of the Roman Empire. Of course, it didn't simply disintegrate - it was attacked from without, - it was attacked by the Goths but it does seem it was put in a position where it didn't receive much resistance. It does seem there are recurrent epochs of barbarism. The Mongols did a great deal of damage in the Middle East, you know,

when the Mongols invaded. The Middle East under Islam reached a very high standard of civilization and culture. That was all destroyed. It never recovered - the Middle East never recovered. When I say Middle East, I mean Persia and Syria, Iraq - as they are now - Egypt. The Mongols wreaked such havoc; they did such devastation. Great libraries were burned. Well, the Muslims themselves earlier on, well they created havoc in some of the areas which they penetrated - like when they burned the great library of Alexandria.

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Vajrasuri: This form of Fundamental Christianity is a form of barbarism.

S: Yes, really one feels that even culturally. I mean, you can't imagine some of those people with an appreciation of Blake or Shakespeare or Shelley, can you? They probably would burn them all. There was no understanding or appreciation of the arts - no sort of emotional refinement. Can you imagine the 'Ladies of the Watchtower' reading Shelley? You saw that little painting by Beryl Cook - I have a reproduction of it - "The Ladies of the Watchtower"

You can't imagine them reading Shelley! (Laughter) I hope I'm not doing the poor ladies an injustice - which you really can't - I mean apart from the Watchtower itself, knitting patterns represent their intellectual limits. One really feels that - looking at Beryl Cook's painting, anyway.

But culture I think is so important! Culture really comes midway between barbarism and savagery on the one hand and higher spiritual culture on the other. It refines one's emotions; it helps one to be more truly human - things like music, poetry, painting, theatre, dance. These channel and refine our crude almost animal energies. They give them meaning and significance, greater depth. (Pause)

I have a sort of theory - maybe it's a bit more than a theory. I think there are different levels and degrees of refinement that civilization and culture (come) in the world. After spending some time in India - many years as an adult and then coming back and spending many years in the West, I've come to the conclusion, that people in India on the whole are more cultured than people in the West. Huh? I mean, this has been my sort of impression - I sort of was asking myself, "well, how has this come about?". Well, for one thing they've been cultured much longer, in many cases. In Europe, culture goes back a very short time. If one reads, say, the history of the Franks - the Franks were the people who took over, what amounted to Germany and France after the collapse of the Roman Empire they were thoroughly barbaric and then of course, they adopted Christianity, and you might say, they became more barbaric still, in some ways because they sort of took to the Old Testament rather than to the New. That's where they found their models and their patterns. And I think even the better side of Christianity - say, well some parts of the New Testament exerted an influence on them only gradually. It was these people who harried Provence where the Albigensians and the Cathars lived. These people coming down from Northern France they were barbarians still in the thirteenth century but they were Christian barbarians, with the blessing of the Church.

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So one gets the impression that the peoples of Western Europe are basically quite barbaric in comparison with many Eastern peoples. And this is the conclusion to which I've come.

I think Christianity in some of its forms, hasn't really helped very much. It hasn't really helped in the civilizing process because in the Old Testament you've got a justification for violence and bloodshed in the name of religion. Christianity is not an unambiguously peaceful religion in the way that Buddhism is.

Marion: Which way overall do you think is the direction that the world is going in? (Laughter)

S: Oh dear - The world is a mixture, isn't it? On the one hand, in a place like Britain, yes, these Eastern spiritual traditions have been introduced. We know about Buddhism, on the other hand, we've got the Atom Bomb. These are the things that are becoming more and more extreme. Maybe I should have put the cat among the pigeons a little bit more - at the other end of the scale, so to speak, at the other end of the coin - I think the Japanese are barbaric because they're very much like the peoples of Western Europe. They've been really cultured only for quite a short period or about the same length of time and you know, Buddhism was introduced there only about the seventh century? It didn't spread very quickly at first. They haven't been a civilized, a cultured people for nearly as long as the Indians have or the Chinese have or the peoples of the Middle East.

So, to generalize a bit wildly - sometimes it's interesting and useful to do this - it's as though, if you take Eurasia as one continent spreading from East to West, the people who are more in the middle of that are much more civilized. The people of the Middle East, the people of the Far East - that is to say India and China. The people on the extremes - that is to say, the Russians, the Western Europeans - especially perhaps the North-western Europeans, say the French, the Germans, the British, the Swedes, the Norwegians, all those people as distinct from the Italians and the Spanish and the Greeks are much less civilized and at the other end of the continent, the Japanese and the Burmese, the Thais - they're much less civilized. (Marion: The Border Tribes!) The Border Tribes!

I'm leaving America out of the picture; I'm leaving Africa out of the picture. They don't have ancient histories in the sense that Eurasia has.

But do you see how I'm thinking? Sometimes it's good to even over-generalise - to see things in a very broad perspective.

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But I have felt that coming and going between Western Europe and India. Even the ex-Untouchables, are more cultured I believe, - it comes up in their behaviour, their social life - their domestic life, yeah? - their attitude to other people - they're more cultured, I feel. There's more refinement, more refined feeling there.

Anjali: The Spanish and Italians - are they more ...?

S: I think the Mediterranean peoples as distinct from the peoples of Northern and North-western Europe are more civilized. Do you see what I mean? Of course, I'm generalizing hopelessly but a generalization is a generalization - I think there is a difference - put it that way, hm? I'm not so sure about the modern Greeks, but then they are modern Greeks; they are not the ancient Greeks. Yes, but maybe people from some parts of Italy, Spain, Southern France even, where the Albigensians were, perhaps ...

Rosie Ong: Are there individuals more civilized only by virtue of the fact of their conditioning or is it by virtue of the fact that they're born in a particular ...?

S: Well, from a Buddhist - from a traditional Buddhist point of view the two are interconnected because you are born on account of your Karma. If your Karma is, let us say, of a more refined type, you'll be born among more refined people. So I think it might be a rather salutary thing if in the West - in Europe - we consider ourselves as belonging perhaps to the Border Tribes so far as Buddhism is concerned. Not perhaps to think of ourselves as quite so highly civilized and cultured as we sometimes do take for granted. (Pause)

Anyway, "Member of the border tribes, long-living gods" - this is explained in the prose that follows which is in a way, just a 'table of contents': "Those with erroneous views and those born

in a period where there is no Buddha and the stupid. These represent the eight unfavourable conditions." The explanation follows so would someone like to read that:

Marion: "How are they unfavourable? It is the nature of denizens of hell to be constantly pained, of spirits to have their minds tormented and of animals to be utterly foolish. These three groups, ignorant of modesty and shame, have developed a wicked character and therefore cannot take the Dharma to heart."

S: So, "How are they unfavourable? It is the nature of denizens of hell to be constantly pained". If you are in a situation where [15] you experience nothing but pain or you experience pain most of the time, well this is not a situation where you can really follow a spiritual path. Well, we know this from our own experience. When we're very ill, unless we've got up already a certain amount of spiritual momentum, there's not much that we can do. So if we were to be suffering all the time, constant severe pain, well that would be an unfavourable condition for following the spiritual path and that is, according to tradition, the state of the 'denizens of hell'.

Rosie O: In the Wheel of Life are there lots of Buddha seeds in the hell realms, or something like that?

S: Well, according to one Chinese tradition, yes. There is a book there which has got an illustration of this. But what does that mean? do you think? (End of Side A)

Linda: ... there are more Buddha seeds in the hell realm than in ...

S: There are more Buddha seeds than certain other realms or at least more Buddha seeds than the Deva realm. What does that mean?

Linda: Because the pressure to get out is really there rather than in the Deva realm.

S: Yes, but of course, in the case of 'hell' you can't get out and the suffering is such that it's almost impossible to perform any good deed - well impossible for you to perform any good deed. So what does one mean therefore, by saying - by speaking in terms of seeds of Buddhahood even in the hell state?

Annie F: It must be possible to get out - if all sentient beings have the chance to become enlightened (S: Yes), it must be possible for the denizens of hell ...

S: Ah yes, you do get out in the sense that you're born as a denizen of hell on account of certain unskilful Karmas (then) and when the effect of Karma is exhausted well then you're born somewhere else, yeah? But you cannot get out in the sense that until you've experienced the results of your unskilful Karmas, you can't escape. And you can't even generate any additional skilful Karma, except - an exception is given - if a Bodhisattva voluntarily [16] descends into that hell realm and gives you teaching so that you can generate at least some skilful thoughts. But now, I think we have to bear in mind that there are two ways of looking at the Wheel of Life or it has a two-fold aspect. One is in terms of actual objectives, so to say, cosmological realms of existence into which we are born and also as representing the different kinds of mental states, in which you can find yourself or into which you can put yourself, in the course of this life itself. So one might say that the hell realm contains more Buddha seeds than the realm of the gods in the sense that when you, in the course of your human life - which is not predominantly painful as the hell realm is - when you in the course of your human life - happen to pass through a particularly painful period - just a period, just a phase - well there is in that period, in that phase, a greater possibility, even a greater opportunity for you to make spiritual progress, than if you're in a devalike sort of state or situation. You see what I mean? And one does in fact sometimes find this happening (at the time). If you're living under very difficult even painful conditions, it can

act as an incentive, it can act as a spur - whereas it's very dangerous perhaps, maybe even more dangerous to live in a very deva-like sort of situation where everything is comfortable and everything is pleasing, everything is agreeable. You're much more likely perhaps to forget the Dharma under those conditions as in fact the gods do.

Annie Fowler: Why is it seen as favourable to be born in a deva realm then? It seems to be a favourable thing to happen according to the Sutras ...

S: In a sense it's favourable, in the sense that it is pleasant but it's unfavourable in the sense that you are limited by your experience of pleasure. One could even say you become accustomed to it, attached to it, - you see?

Dhammadinna: Bhante, is it - the 'long-living gods' - are they still in the Kama-loka so sometimes when it says it's favourable to be reborn in the god-realm is that referring to the rupa and arupa-lokas which correspond to positive states - I mean is there that kind of distinction?

S: I don't think so. One could make that distinction but I don't think it actually is made as far as I remember.

[17]

Dhammadinna: So it's always whatever realms the gods are in, it's always unfavourable ...?

S: You're reborn in a heavenly realm as a result of skilful action, definitely, hmm? But it's as though skilful action is not enough; happiness is not enough - understanding and insight are also needed.

Dhammadinna: It seems almost, say if you're predominantly unskilful, you'd be born in one of the lower realms - say from the human realm and if you're predominantly skilful but you don't actually gain transcendental does that mean that you then get stuck in the god-realm for a long time because that's ... ? (Laughter)

S: Yes, you do. You can't get stuck in that indefinitely fortunately because all these things are impermanent according to Buddhism but we see a sort of analogy of this, say, in the case of people who come along to FWBO Centres - we've talked about this before - come along to FWBO Centres, maybe with problems, psychological problems and they do a bit of meditation, they experience some Kalyana Mitrata, do a bit of Dharma study and they get very much better. They start feeling happy, healthy and human and maybe they'd never been happy, healthy and human before and they rather like being happy, healthy and human and they want to enjoy that for a bit. Even though the Dharma is available, they're not so interested in Dharma as Dharma. They don't want to go beyond being happy, healthy and human. Do you see what I mean? It's a bit like that. Your efforts to overcome your problems or to develop, to grow - you've reached a state where you so much enjoy the state that you've gained, you don't want to go any further. And I think that is a sort of difficulty or problem inherent in the process of development itself; that it does very quickly become really very pleasant and agreeable and there is therefore, the temptation to settle down in that pleasant and agreeable Deva-like state. That could only be avoided, if the Path was difficult or even painful, the whole of the Way, right up until you actually got Nirvana and you're in no danger any longer settling down in the comfortable and pleasant. Mmm? So I think it's a difficulty that is inseparable from the nature of spiritual development itself. I don't think there is any way around this apart from increased mindfulness and so on, or the intervention of spiritual friends But even that doesn't always work - you don't want to be mindful! or not more mindful than you have been. And you don't want to listen to your spiritual friends: "They know I'm having a good time - I never had a good time before. I never enjoyed myself [18] before! I want to enjoy myself! I don't want to gain enlightenment just yet! (Laughter) I want to have a good time! " This is what people say.

I mean, this is what St. Augustine was supposed to have said: In his ode of praise to God - 'Oh God, make me chaste, but not yet!' (Laughter) So there are quite a lot of 'not-yets' sort of being aired around FWBO Centres in all sorts of ways. You know, quite happy with the higher reaches of the mundane. There's nothing wrong with that - one passes through, but people tend to settle down. You see what I mean? (Dhammadinna: Yes, I see what you mean.) Perhaps one might even say well they need to, for a bit. Well, if you haven't ever enjoyed (your life) well, you must have had a pretty miserable life. Maybe it's not surprising that people want to enjoy life, even in the ordinary happy, healthy and human mundane sense - at least for a bit, you know, before they - I was going to say 'take up their cross' (Laughter) but no, take up their Dharmachakra and walk on, (Laughter) famous words!

Greta: But by the very idea of settling down as nothing is static, it really does mean that one is slipping by.

S: If that really does mean that you're ignoring the fact of impermanence - so your settling down in the long run must be a source of ... and suffering for you because you can't settle down. At the very least you grow old and can no longer enjoy yourself in the way to which you were accustomed. You can't stand the pace any longer after reaching a certain age (Laughter). So then you are apt to turn however unwillingly or reluctantly to better things. I think this is quite a delicate point, you know, in connection with dealing with people who do come along to the Centres and classes, communities - for how long should one, so to speak, allow them to enjoy being just happy, healthy and human before you sort of start stirring them up, reminding them that well, there are further stages of the Path to reach up there. Their possibilities of growth have not been exhausted, hmm? It's not easy sometimes. You may feel you're being a bit of a 'spoil-sport' on the other hand you may feel, well, these people are settling down in something that isn't going to give them any real and lasting happiness or satisfaction. It's all right for the time being but not forever and ever. It can't be for ever and ever. They're stuck in a sort of 'deva-realm'.

[19]

Rosie Ong: Would you say that in the hell-realms, essentially people will just experience the results of their evil Karma, do you think they're creating any more bad Karma? while they're in hell?

S: Mmm, that's quite a question. Depends upon their reaction to their suffering. That if they can't realize that it is the result of their own action, they become very very resentful and angry, then perhaps they are just making things worse. That's quite a terrible thought!

Dhammadinna: So is it only the human realm where you - the other realms seem to be the result of Karma - the animals, the Pretas, the hells and the gods - so the human realm is where you've got the choice?

S: It's as though, in the other realms, certainly in the hell realm, the 'conditioning' let us say, is so powerful - there's not much you can do about it; you can't really resist it; whereas when you're subjected to terrible constant suffering, well it is very very difficult if not impossible to generate skilful positive thoughts or do skilful positive things.

Rosie O: So the tendency of people in a sense is one of sliding down? Of getting stuck in hell.

S: I think once you start on the downward path it becomes increasingly difficult to stop. It's what I sometimes call the 'negative spiral'. It's like when you become an alcoholic - the more addicted to alcohol you become, the more your capacity, your power of choice is limited. For instance, supposing you'd never tasted alcohol well then you'd have perfect freedom of choice, whether to take it or not to, but supposing you get into the habit of drinking alcohol, well, it becomes

increasingly difficult not to take it. You've limited your own freedom and a point may come when you cannot give it up and become less and less able to give it up and then you get into - what I call - a 'negative alcoholic spiral'. Then you need external help.

In the same way, if you deteriorated morally and spiritually, you know, below a certain point, you need the intervention of spiritual friends even Bodhisattvas and luckily there are people inspired to do just this sort of work.

Rosie Ong: What does one have to do to get to hell?

[20]

S: To get to hell! I think it would be better if you didn't know! (Laughter)

Rosie O: Is there any likelihood that we would for example?

S: Well, I mean a sojourn in hell can be very short. I mean, the repeated persistent taking of life; the malicious infliction of suffering these are the things which are most likely to land us into states of suffering - I mean the deliberate, especially the malicious infliction of suffering on other living beings. Maybe little things like you slamming the door or forgetting to post somebody's letter or these sort of things are not going to land you in hell.

Rosie O: Sometimes Buddhist scriptures make out that you ...

S: Ah, yes, I'm afraid some Buddhist texts, present a very exaggerated picture, yes. That even a very sort of minor fault is going to land you in hell. This is not really Buddhist teaching at all. They are just painting the picture in especially glaring colours, supposedly to impress it more on your mind. I don't really think this works. I don't think this sort of approach is in accordance with the principles of Buddhism as a spiritual teaching. It's a sort of bullying approach; it's a dishonest approach yeah? You're not going to go if you 'borrow' somebody's pencil - it's ridiculous! (Laughter)

Debbie Seamer: What about our abortions then? What are the results of - because so many women ...?

S: Well, you're jumping into quite another subject now, right, because the traditional Buddhist view - and I state it as a traditional Buddhist view - probably to make of it what you will - is that abortion represents taking life - even represents taking human life. This is the traditional Buddhist view, so one has to reckon with this. It's open to one to agree or disagree but this is what Buddhism traditionally does say. And so that would mean, that's a serious matter. But I mean, don't forget also that Buddhism regards - I think we went into this the other day - regards an offence as being more or less serious according to the 'spiritual status' so to speak, of the being - the person with regard to whom the offence is committed. If you give dana to a highly developed spiritual being, that is productive of more merit than if you give dana to someone who isn't so highly developed. In the same way, if you take the life of a more developed [21] being, it's a more serious matter, than taking the life of a less developed being. If you take the life of a human being, it's a more serious matter than taking the life of an ant or bee, yeah? So one might, therefore argue that even though abortion represents the taking of human life, it is not a fully developed human life and is therefore a less serious offence. One could argue in that way. It would still be quite a serious matter.

Rosie Ong: How about things like milk and eggs and things like that because they do involve taking life?

S: Well yes - it might even give one food for reflection, that you cannot live really without taking

life - so that is a very serious reflection and it is therefore incumbent upon one to take as little life and to inflict as little suffering as possible. You should be in a way, grateful to other forms of life because they make it possible for you to live . So we should realize the seriousness of the responsibility of having embodied existence at all. It's only justified in a way, if in other ways, if we make the world a better place, by our more skilful words, thoughts and deeds. So that when a balance is struck, so to speak, we have in fact, in the course of our lives, done more good than we've done harm.

Debbie: What would be the case, if someone say, in a state of ignorance - who did like - like say you've got a woman or an unhappy man who have been in this position where they did have an abortion and once they did gain some spiritual awareness and started working on the Dharma and meditating, whatever, I mean would that kind of be balancing with the ...?

S: I mean, according to Buddhism, actions committed in ignorance, without an actual volition - of their consequence - well the classic example which is given of the monk who went into a layman's house and sat down on a chair, not noticing that the chair was covered with a cloth - just sat down on a chair. Well, there happened to be a baby under the cloth so he squashed the baby and killed it in sitting down. So the Buddha was asked: Well had he been guilty of - well, you would say murder or even manslaughter - and the Buddha said "No, it was unintentional". The Jains would have held that he was morally responsible. They have a different ... But the Buddha held, "no, he was not responsible for the deliberate taking of life". But he should have been more careful. He was responsible there. Because [22] a monk, when he enters a layman's house should not do so without permission and should not sit down without permission. So he violated that rule, but it was a very much less serious matter. So one could say, in a sense, ignorance is an excuse or unawareness is an excuse but then from another point of view, if you are unaware, that affects your whole being and therefore everything that you do indirectly, to the extent that you're unaware, you are, as it were, less human. Everything you do is less human. But no doubt to consciously go against an ethical principle you know and acknowledge is much worse than performing the same action in ignorance of their ethical principle or having never thought about it.

Paula: Just thinking about people who appear to be in a hell-realm maybe people that you know and yet there's no actual way that you can reach them by talking to them, I feel that it helps just simply to put them in a metta bhavana. It actually does something for them.

S: I'm sure sometimes that thought is sufficiently powerful to operate even to these depths. I think you'll find this. I mean, for instance, supposing you have a disagreement or misunderstanding even a quarrel with somebody, eh? and you go away and you do a metta bhavana, you may well find, that when you next see that person, they'll be very ready to make things up with you as though your metta bhavana had actually directly acted upon their minds.

But to come back to this question of the denizens of hell, or to come back to the question of hell, itself - in its more psychological sense - that is to say not as a realm, as a state that you may be in from time to time - being in hell in that sense, means to be the victim of a very extreme negative state - especially anger or hatred and also mental disturbance. Sometimes people who are in a sense, insane are sort of in a hell-realm. Sometimes you just can't contact them; you can't do anything for them and they suffer very intensely. I'm not thinking of the case of someone who is supposed to be mad just because they are a bit eccentric and do things in their own way, and see things in their own way - that's different. I mean, Blake was supposed to be mad but he had a very happy and blissful sort of life. But sometimes people are in very strange psychotic states, suffer very much so this is like being in hell, in the course of this life. When you're in that sort of state, you can't really do much for yourself. You need a really sort of effective Bodhisattva-like person to come along and make some sort of contact, with you - some kind of positive effect, in a way. [23] But apart from that, you'd be really overcome by feelings of hatred violent hatred is

really to be in hell realm. There is a Japanese, sort of Zen story.

There's the story about a warrior or a samurai - something, I forget the details, but anyway he invaded a Zen temple and I think he got into an argument with a Zen Master about the existence of hell. I forget how they came to be discussing it, anyway they were discussing it and - there are two versions of this and I'm talking of both of them - (Laughter) Anyway, I'll tell you one thing which was the discussion became quite hot and the abbot was asserting, yes, there is a hell and the samurai was saying no there isn't and so the samurai got so angry that he half-drew his sword out of his scabbard and the abbot said "There is a hell and now you're in it!" So the samurai realized that, and he pushed him back and then the abbot said: "And now you're out of it!" (Laughter)

It's very much like that isn't it? When you're overcome by real anger, you can be just evil - do such harm, damage and mischief you can be so sorry afterwards.

So when one is in that sort of state, either of psychotic misery or in that state of terrible rage and anger, there's no question of any spiritual progress - whether it's a temporary phase in this life that you're passing through or whether it's a sort of world that you've been reborn to.

Annie F: Are these results of Karma performed in this life? When you get into states like that is that a result of Karma you ...?

S: It's just like the case of the alcoholic. You start off with the act being in your power, but the more you indulge in that, the less it becomes possible for you to give up so the more you give way to anger, the more difficult it becomes for you, not to give way to anger. So once you're in hell, if you're not careful, you may prolong your own stay. It's rather like - you go to prison, you're sent to prison on account of some offence but in prison you commit further offences which result in your being kept in prison even longer. So as the result of that you commit another offence and you're kept in a bit longer still. It's rather like that.

Rosie Ong: Would you encourage people to be Vegans?

S: I think this must be a question of one's own, as it were, individual [24] sensitivity. If you really feel, you know, when you're drinking milk, you're depriving a calf etc., etc., well, if you really feel that, you'll stop drinking the milk - otherwise not. Depends on the extent of your sensitivity. I certainly encourage people to be Vegetarian. It's not as though there's a hard, a fast line to be drawn anywhere, because even the Vegetarian is living on vegetable life. He probably isn't inflicting suffering but certainly perhaps taking life, to some extent but one just has to do as little damage as possible, to live in the world inflicting as little suffering as possible.

On reflection one can't help inflicting some suffering by virtue of the fact that you're living at all. So do as much good as you can to compensate and more than compensate for the harm that you do. If you think of all the environmental damage that human beings are doing, it's really dreadful! It's really amazing that people aren't more responsible, more aware. Fortunately some people are becoming aware of these things.

Anyway, let's get out of hell, huh? "It is the nature of denizens of hell to be constantly pained". When one is constantly pained, whether just for a period in this life or because one has been reborn as a denizen of hell, it's very very difficult, if not impossible to follow the spiritual life - so that is an unfavourable condition for leading a spiritual life.

And then "of spirits" - who are these spirits? - "of spirits to have their minds tormented".

Debbie: Hungry ghosts.

S: They are the Pretas and what are they tormented by?

Voice: Hunger (S: More than hunger!)

Voices: Craving.

S: Craving! You may remember that they're represented in art with enormous bellies and thin necks and needle-eye like mouths. But this really represents the state of neurotic craving. You can't take in all that you crave for - you're insatiable. If you get into extreme neurotic craving in this life, while you're in that state, it's almost impossible to make any spiritual progress or lead a spiritual life.

Have you seen this state of extreme neurotic craving? Yeah? In people? In respect of what sort of things? Food? (Voices: Drugs, Sex) Drugs, sex, even affection. It can be very very desperate sometimes. [25] Perhaps it's not very good to dwell on these things, theoretically.

"And of animals to be utterly foolish". Foolish is perhaps not quite the right word. What is it? Unintelligent, (Marion: Blind) Blind. You notice that here the 'Three Unskilful Roots' as they're called: Lobha, Dvesa and Moha - predominate respectively in first of all, the denizens of hell - there's a predominance of anger and hatred. And then among the Pretas a predominance of craving, greed and among animals a predominance of ignorance.

"These three groups, ignorant of modesty and shame, have developed a wicked character and therefore cannot take the Dharma to heart". Cannot take the Dharma seriously. What about this modesty and shame? It's Hiri - Ottappa . We have touched upon these two. They're called the guardians of the world. We touched upon them in other study retreats, especially dealing with the positive mental states.

Annie F: What did you call them, Bhante? The protectors ... ?

S: Hiri and Ottappa in Pali. They're the protectors of the world in the sense of human society. There's no human society, - there's no civilization, one might say, without hiri and ottappa.

Hiri is more like - Guenther calls this 'modesty and shame'. Well, one is self-regarding and the other is 'other-regarding'. Regardless of what one calls in English - Hiri has reference to the positive group. When you've become conscious that you've done something of which the positive group - your spiritual friends - I wouldn't say 'disapprove'. That has all the wrong associations but about which they wouldn't be happy, - they'd be grieved, hmm? that you'd done something - not because you'd been wicked or broken the rules or anything like that but just because you've fallen below the level they've expected of you. They weren't personally disappointed, they were disappointed for your sake, because they have genuine metta towards you. They were sorry to see you just doing what was unskilful and laying up future suffering for yourself. So your consciousness that you've disappointed your spiritual friends - this is called 'hiri'. Hmm? It can be translated either as 'shame' or 'modesty' , in fact but you get the meaning? It's as though the reaction of your spiritual friends - the positive reaction of your spiritual friends to something unskilful that you've done, makes you aware of what you've done. You wake up to the fact, well, you've done something unskilful and you feel ashamed; in a positive sense. "I shouldn't have done that!" [26] Do you see what I mean? There's no suggestion of blaming or disobedience in a negative sense. You are conscious that you've done something that has grieved your spiritual friends - not because you've upset them in a purely subjective personal way. Well, they're grieved to see you, you know, regressing on the spiritual path, without knowing it even.

And then Ottappa is your own mind or your own conscience even, so to speak, telling you that was wrong - you shouldn't have done that. It's the better part of you, telling so to speak, the worst

part, that you shouldn't have done that - "that was wrong" When you become conscious that the action you've committed was an unskilful action and you tell yourself: "I shouldn't have done that." You blame yourself in a quite positive way. You genuinely regret what you've done. This is ottappa. Usually translated as 'conscience'. But it isn't quite conscience in the usual sense of the word.

So, "these three groups" - that is to say: denizens of hell, hungry ghosts and animals are "ignorant of modesty and shame". Well, because they're in such a state! They're not so much ignorant of them but unaware of them. They just can't think in those terms.

"Have developed a wicked character". This is not just that they performed the odd wicked action, they developed wicked character. They've become confirmed in their wicked actions. Huh? Have you seen any of this? You're not an alcoholic just because you get drunk once, but if you're habitually drunk, well then you're an alcoholic. Dr Johnson has got a rather amusing in the sense that he said that - In the eighteenth century they were rather coarse sometimes in their language and they - as an expression of abuse they might call somebody a 'whoremonger'. So they were rather free with this sort of expression so somebody apparently in Dr Johnson's hearing was called a 'whoremonger'. So he said, "It is not right to call a man a whoremonger simply because he gets one woman with child, any more than it is right to call a man an 'ironmonger' because he sells a pin, my friend." (Laughter) You see? It's a question of the difference between one occasional admittedly unskilful action and the habitual performance of that unskilful action.

If you habitually perform certain unskilful actions, then you have an unskilful character. You have a 'wicked character'. You can perform a wicked action without being of wicked character, in other words. You see what I mean? And very often, unfortunately, we judge a person as being of wicked character on the strength of one admittedly wicked action. Someone may steal just once. They are not therefore a thief, so to speak, in character. [27] They're not a thief in the sense of being 'thief and nothing but thief'. They've stolen once. Or someone, as I said, might get drunk once that doesn't make them a drunkard (Pause)

"And therefore cannot take the Dharma to heart". So being ignorant of modesty and shame and having developed a wicked character; denizens of hell, hungry ghosts, animals cannot take the Dharma to heart. With regard to the animals, it's not just a question of the occupants of a particular realm of being but people with animal-like behaviour. And sometimes people do behave, at least for a while, like animals. So what would you say would be animal-like behaviour? (Pause) Well, behaviour which was exclusively concerned with purely animal functions, without any rationality, any human awareness and so on. Just activities connected with food, sleep, reproduction... If you're just concerned with those activities - you confine yourself to those activities, well you're not really human, huh? And you "cannot take the Dharma to heart".

Annie Fowler: Does that mean that those people, those beings can only escape those realms by the intervention of a Bodhisattva?

S: There are two things: escaping in the sense of establishing some contact with higher realms even while still living in those particular realms and actually leaving those realms in the sense of decreasing from those realms. You will decrease from those realms eventually just because Karma is finite. But even while you are in those realms you may be able to establish contact with beings of some other realms, say, in the case of animals - human beings and in the case of human beings - Bodhisattvas and in the case of denizens of hell with Bodhisattvas, in such a way that even though you still have to serve your sentence, so to speak, in a particular sphere but you can pave the way for a future rebirth in some better happier world.

Anyway, go on to the 'long-lived gods'

Rosie Ong: "'Long-living Gods' means those who are imperceptive; and since in this and its attendant state consciousness-functions are interrupted in their proper working, the Dharma cannot be taken to heart. It also refers to the gods of the world of sensuality, because they are long-lived when compared to men. And it means that life as a god always represents an unfavourable condition, because the gods living in temporal happiness, do not strive for the good and wholesome."

S: Hmm. So "'long-living Gods' mean those who are imperceptive" - that is to say, those who are not conscious. This is a strange sort of order of gods according to some Buddhist traditions, who live, [28] so to speak, somewhere up in the higher realms. There is a note about this. Yes. They live in the 'fourth Arupya' - formless meditation. So they're in a sort of highly meditative state but there's no mental activity and therefore they cannot follow the Dharma. Because to follow the Dharma, there must be a certain amount of mental activity; a certain amount of thought which leads to understanding - which leads to insight. Do you see what I mean?

So 'long-living Gods' means, in the first place this particular class of gods called 'imperceptive'. "And since in this and its attendant state consciousness-functions are interrupted in their proper working, the Dharma cannot be taken to heart." You cannot learn about the Dharma. "It also refers to the gods of the world of sensuality" - the kama-loka devas like Indra with his (dove which is ...), "because they are long-lived when compared to men". They're called 'long-living' in that sense. "It means that life as a god" - this is the essence of the matter "always represents an unfavourable condition because the gods, living in temporal happiness, do not strive for the good and wholesome." This is the essence of the matter.

In other words any sort of state which is so agreeable, so pleasant that you no longer strive to develop skilful mental states, therefore following the path, is a realm of the gods. Whether it may be an actual world, on another plane or whether it may be a situation in this life, itself.

Annie F: I don't understand Bhante, how you get out when you're in that sort of state - how you can get out of that?

S: Well, first of all there's no difficulty about getting out of it because it just comes to an end sooner or later. You're chucked out of it, so to speak. Thrown out of it by Karma (Laughter); it was Karma that got you there, especially the good Karma, comes to an end - it's exhausted ...

Annie F: Say you were in a dhyanic state which you're trying to cultivate in order for insight to arise, how does that happen? That's what I'm trying to get at? How does insight come out of the Dhyanic state?

S: Well, it doesn't. The Dhyanic state provides a sort of basis or foundation by integrating your energy ...

(End of tape 11)

[29]

You don't know the truth about impermanence. You have to start off by thinking about impermanence before you can develop actual insight into it. The thinking forms the basis for the development of the insight. Therefore it is said that, this is the sort of classical Buddhist procedure, that you immerse yourself in the Dhyana states. You collect all your energies in that way and then you start up mental activities. In a sense you come down from a higher to a lower dhyanic state. In a sense, yes? In a sense, that you come down from a non-discursive to a discursive mental state, but with all that energy behind you, in that unified and integrated unobstructed state. You start thinking in a constructed way, in a purposive way and that can lead on occasions to the development of insight, to a flash of insight. Do you see what I mean? That is

the procedure.

Now, if you are a yogi who is practising meditation, but with no idea about insight, because of no contact with the Dharma, then you may need an external teacher to come along and tell you, "No, that's not the Path, or at least there are further stages. You need to come down out of that mundane meditation and actually reflect, reflect about impermanence, so as to develop insight and go further." I mean this is the point you know, of the Buddha's early studies, under the teachers: Udraka Ramaputra and who was the other one?

Dhammadinna: Alora.

S: Alora Kalama, yes. This was the point of his studies under them. I mean, he attained yogic experiences, he attained higher Dhyanic states but they were not able to teach them how to develop insight, because they were not themselves, Enlightened. So he left them.

Vajrasuri: Sounds like it would arise from lower Dhyanic states, not the higher ones?

S: You mean, we mustn't be led astray by liberalism? You see what I mean? In a sense, you've gone from a higher state to a lower; in a sense, you haven't. But it's as though on the basis of the higher states, on the energy and positivity generated by the higher states, you start up a train of positive, directed thinking. Technically, well, yes, one has come down to a lower Dhyanic state, but it's as though, you know, you're drawing back in order to go forward. It's more like that. You haven't really 'come down' except in a very narrow technical sense.

[30]

Megha: It's like changing down in gear in order to pick up more speed to overtake.

S: Yes, right.

Dhammadinna: The fact that the Buddha knew there was something more, even though He didn't know what it was. I mean it's quite interesting because ...

S: Yes, well, in traditional terms, it's explained by the fact that He'd followed the Bodhisattva Path, in previous lives, but if one doesn't want to, you know, accept that traditional explanation, yes, well, the Buddha was a human being in a manner of speaking, with a greater potential, or with His potential nearer the surface. (Pause) He had a greater capacity for discontent, one might say.

Dhammadinna: Pushing and questioning.

S: yes.

Megha: Is it because you've got the framework that you know that after the fourth Dhyana, that it's wise to reflect on Insight practice, that in fact you do it? And if you don't have that framework, then you ...

S: Then you may not discover that by yourself. The Buddha did. But those two teachers didn't. They genuinely felt that they'd reached the goal, that there was nothing beyond.

Megha: Does that mean that there's some kind of awareness in the fourth Dhyana that enables you to then take up a reflective practice because you say there's no mental ...

S: No. You would, according to Buddhist tradition, you would need to be in contact with Buddhist tradition, to have studied the Dharma; to know that there was a stage beyond that. Even

after attaining the fourth Dhyana, you would still need to develop Insight and therefore to 'come down', so to speak, to another level where mental activity was possible. If you were just a yogi, outside the Buddhist tradition you may well not know that. (Pause)

Debbie: Does that answer your question?

Megha: No it doesn't. I was wondering, about, you're actually in the [31] fourth stage, and so there's a certain amount of awareness that you know you're there and ...

S: Ah, yes and no. Because if you have a comprehensive understanding of the spiritual path, meditation, insight, you go into the Dhyanic states, as it were, with a resolution, that you want, ultimately to develop Insight. So that resolution produces a sort of effect, that after you've been in the Dhyanic states for a sufficiently long time, there's a sort of a pull, which is the result of your previous resolution so to speak, pulling you back to that lower level, because the time has come now for you to start developing Insight. (Pause)

It's just like when you go to bed, yes? When you've had enough sleep, you wake up, yes? When you've been in that Dhyana state long enough, you know, for it to form the basis for the development of Insight, then you sort of are pulled back, yes? Except that here a resolution is required - you don't have to make a resolution when you go to sleep that you're going to wake up in the morning.

Kay: It's just as well that that happens, really, or you could be there indefinitely, like a Deva.

S: You could indeed. (Fault in tape - unclear sentences)

A Voice: Is that a state that some Indian Maharishis get into? Some yogis do?

S: They can go without food, for quite a long time, yes. There's nothing wonderful about it, nothing Spiritual. Animals can do this. They go into a state of hibernation. It's not quite the same though, because in animals there's a metabolic process going on. They lose weight, don't they? Apparently these yogis don't lose weight. The metabolic process itself, so I gather, though I have no personal knowledge of this, is suspended. (Pause)

Dhammadinna: Could you repeat the bit about resolution because it wasn't ...

S: Yes, Oh dear, I deliberately didn't stop because I thought I might not be able to repeat it! (Laughter) At least it's on one of the cassettes? Yes.

Dhammadinna: The tapes get transcribed.

S: Well, we'll have to make a sort of note somewhere. (Pause)

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I was just reminded in this connection of one particular point which may be of interest. It is in a way quite relevant with regard to entering into these higher Dhyanic states, corresponding say, to that of the long-living Gods in the first sense. That is to say, the imperceptive Gods. In the Buddha's time, you know, some of the disciples, some of the Bhikkhus, did enter into these sort of states and when one is in these sort of states you just can't hear anything. If anyone speaks, you can't hear. You're not conscious of your surroundings at all. But there was a sort of rule, you might even say a 'vinna' rule for Bhikkhus who were about to go into these states - that they had to make a resolution that there was one circumstance which would cause them to rouse from their trance. You know they wouldn't respond to any other sound, but one sound they would respond to and arouse from their trance. What do you think that was? If you've read it somewhere don't

say so.

A Voice: A Mantra?

S: No. What sort of a call? Let us say, what sort of summons?

A Voice: The Guru?

S: No, not even the Guru actually.

A Voice: A cry for help? (S: No.) Voice: A bell. (Laughter)

Debbie: The sound of Reality? (S: No.) (Laughter)

Voice: Give us a clue?

S: Well, it's from something collective rather than something individual, in a manner of speaking. Well, that should make it easy.

Rosie O: A fire or something?

S: No, they're not going to bother about fire.

Paula: A herd of elephants? (Laughter) (S.: No, they'd ignore that!)

Vajrasuri: The Bodhicitta?

S: No, a quite simple thing; a call from outside. From?

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Debbie: I was going to say a spiritual friend, but that would relate to the Guru, wouldn't it?

S: No, it's plural, rather than singular.

Voices: The Sangha?

S: The Sangha! The spiritual community. Isn't that significant? For instance, they might be wanted to make up a quorum for an ordination. So what does that suggest to you? The fact that there was this one exception? That they had to even make a resolution, if they were Bhikkhus, before going into that kind of trance, that they had to respond to that call alone and emerge from the trance? So what does that tell you? What does that suggest?

Dhammadinna: The importance of the Sangha.

S: Yes. The importance of the Sangha. Not even for the Buddha, but for the Sangha. That just shows you how much importance is attached to, well, to Kalyana Mitrata, to the possibility of receiving someone into the Sangha. Yes? If there's a call for that sort of purpose, or for anything that involves the welfare of the Sangha, the welfare of the spiritual community, your enjoyment of that high state of absorption, is just to be put aside.

Debbie: That's really inspiring, isn't it? (S: Yes, yes.)

Anjali: Could they hear that call?

S: Well, that would be their resolution, that they would be able to respond, that they would sort of leave a little loop-hole as it were. They could determine that. Yes? It's like a little alarm, and for that alarm only, you know, could be triggered off so that they would respond. (Pause) So you know, one can make, before going into a deep meditation, a sort of resolution, or in a sense, if you know the Dharma, that resolution is there automatically: that after one has been in a Dhyanic state for a certain length of time, so to speak, or after the Dhyanic states have reached a sufficiency of intensity, well, they you will be, as it were, re-called to, so to speak, a lower level where mental activity will start up. But not in a way one would have thoughts, wandering thought, no, in directed, sustained, constructive, even creative mental activity, designed to culminate in Insight. (Pause)

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Vajrasuri: A call from the Sangha - if you were in the middle of a Dhyanic state, it doesn't actually mean someone coming and knocking on the door and saying: "Hey, come on, we need you"?

S: It might. I mean who is going to convey the call? Well, it might come, as it were, telepathically, but no, I think, judging by the context, the assumption is that the bhikkhu would actually call them that "you are summoned to a meeting of the Order, a meeting of the Sangha." And they would hear that; that alone they would hear. Even if the herd of elephants went trampling by they wouldn't hear it. But even if someone knocked very gently, and called very softly, "There's a meeting of the Sangha", they would hear it and they would emerge from their trance. It's quite a thought.

Vajrasuri: It's a very sort of mundane thing operating in so far as the cry of the baby wakens the mother, whereas all kinds of clanging ...

S: Yes, she might sleep through a thunderstorm, but the cry of the baby, so I'm told, - I hope this is not just mythology - awakens the mother. She hears, she's attuned to that - always?

Vajrasuri: Well, you can train yourself not to be. (Laughter)

S: Ah well, that's cold reason, isn't it?

Jenny: Well, not only that, but say if you have a baby in hospital and there's a nursery full of babies, you can actually pick out your child's cry, from about 20 babies' cries.

S: Well, the maternal instinct is a wonderful thing. It is quite odd - I read about some experiments performed on rabbits - in a way they were quite upsetting in that the experiments should have been performed but, I mean, I'll just mention, without going into detail that they took a rabbit, which had just given birth to baby rabbits and separated them, by many many miles and then they monitored both the babies and the mother. They wired up the mother to an electrode or something, and at certain intervals they killed the babies. But at the instant that a baby was killed, there was a definite well, one might say - reaction in the mother, as though the mother's organism knew that the baby had died. So this really shows the possibility of sort of extra-physical communication or whatever one calls it. It also suggests the very strong link between certainly, mother and child. I don't know about father and child, but mother and child, certainly.

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Kay: I experienced that, when I was in Amsterdam, my father was dying, in London and I just knew I had to come home. I wasn't due to come home but I just came back.

Daphne: At times I've been aware that one of my children has hurt themselves when I've been meditating in a different location.

S: So it seems as though these natural ties as it were, are not to be lightly gone against. I mean, this is what it also suggests - I don't know if we discussed it in this group or the other - I mean, in Buddhism you know, matricide or patricide is considered worse than ordinary murder, because you have to disrupt a much greater degree of natural closeness. It's bad enough to kill another member of the human race, because there is a certain amount of human solidarity, but it's very, very much worse, according to Buddhist teaching to disrupt by violent means, the link between you and your parents.

Rosie Ong: Do you think that that link is more or are you just more sensitive to it?

S: I think actually it is more, I would say. There certainly seems to be the assumption. (Pause) So in a way, it gives one food for thought. I mean there is interconnection between different living things. You're not, you know, as separate as you appear.

Anyway, "life as a god always represents an unfavourable condition because the gods, living in temporal happiness, do not strive for the good and wholesome". That's what we've really been discussing, though we've got a little bit off the track. Let's go on then:

Marion: I'm sorry Bhante, but where do the asuras come into this, because all the other ...

S: They're not mentioned are they?. Because I think they'd be included under the gods, because sometimes five, sometimes six realms are mentioned and the six realms are made out of the five by sub-dividing the world of the gods. So presumably, asuras were a lower grade of god and more warlike, more obstreperous, more aggressive. They're always fighting with the gods proper.

Marion: They still believe that they're equal or still believe ...

S: I don't know whether they're said to believe that. No, I think they don't, because they're fighting the gods for possession of the [36] Tree of Immortality, aren't they? They've got higher sort of powers in a way, they're very strong and fierce, but they're not so sure about their immortality, as it were. I don't know what my mythology says about them in this respect or whether it says anything at all. The asuras are, in a way, quite interesting because it's said of them, I don't know if you know about this, or have heard about this - that among the asuras, that the males are exceptionally or extremely ugly and the females are exceptionally beautiful. What do you think this means? If it means anything. Presumably, it must mean something, that the males are very war-like, violent, aggressive, fierce and the females are very seductive, tempting, etc. etc. What do you think this stands for?

Dhammadinna: Extreme polarization.

S: Yes. Extreme polarization of opposites, even extreme sexual polarization, one might say. The macho-male and what's the counterpart in female terms? What's she called?

Voice: Ah, the vamp.

S: The vamp. (Laughter) So, you know, the asura, the highly sexually polarized asura, is not on such a high level as the human. So to the extent that you approximate to the asura type, you're either a very macho-male or a femme fatale. You are to that extent a bit less human. Maybe that's worth thinking about. (Pause)

Dhammadinna: And the gods get progressively androgynous, don't they?

S: Progressively. Even in the Heaven of Indra, there is still sexual difference, because that is in the Karma-loka, but as one ascends into the Rupa-loka there is no sexual differentiation. There,

the devas are, as it were, androgynous. They're neither male nor female. They, as it were, integrate those two aspects.

Dhammadinna: So, from that point of view, the asuras are more polarized than the human realm?

S: Hmm, yes. One could say that. Yes. So to that extent they are less deva-like. (Dhammadinna: Less human) In that sense they are lower than human. Sometimes they are classified, in fact, as being inferior to human beings. (Pause) [37] Not that the classification is always quite neat. There's a few loose ends here and there. But you imagine the type, so to speak, the asura type?

Dhammadinna: It's a bit like the gangster and his moll, isn't it? (Laughter) That's an extreme instance.

S: Yes, that's right. But isn't it interesting that the gangster does have a moll? And the moll has a gangster? (Laughter) They sort of go together, don't they? You can't imagine the gangster, you know, having a delicate, really feminine type, nor can you imagine the moll having a sort of aesthete (?) one, type. So, gangster and moll go together.

Dhammadinna: It's probably the movie syndrome, isn't it?

S: Anyway, we won't dwell upon that. We'll leave it for your more serious reflection and less hysterical moments. (Laughter) (pause)

But I mean, that is interesting that the more integrated you are, as a human being, you know, the less extremely male or female you are. Yes? Not that you're not either male or female but you're certainly not extremely so. This is what seems to be suggested by this tradition about the asuras. (Pause)

Rosie Ong: Are they characterized by their competitiveness?

S: Well, yes, especially the male asuras, no doubt. They're highly competitive, in relation to the gods with whom they're constantly fighting, according to the literature. The female asuras are sort of like Sirens, you know, - the classical Sirens of the classical myth. They lure shipwrecked sailors, and entice them, and of course eventually feed on them and only the bones are left. There's a moral there. (Laughter) Anyway, let's carry on: We're still dealing with these four forms of existence. Let's carry on, top of page 15.

Debbie: "Therefore, it is only here and now in this slight misery of human existence that we find what is valuable for spiritual development; in other words, discontent with Samsara and compassion towards all sentient beings are born; our haughtiness is curbed; and while refraining from evil deeds, we delight in whatever is good and wholesome. In the Bodhicaryavatara it is written:

Still another value of misery is that discontent dispels one's haughtiness; that compassion towards beings in Samsara is born;
And that one abstains from evil and delights in the good and wholesome".

[38]

S: "Thus these four forms of existence do not present a unique occasion". (Pause)

What are these four then? It's the denizens of hell, the spirits, the animals and the gods. "These four forms of existence do not present a unique occasion". "And therefore it is only here and now" - you notice the emphasis on 'here and now', "in this slight misery of human existence that we find what is valuable for spiritual development". In other words, "discontent with Samsara

and compassion towards all Sentient beings are born". There's only slight misery in the human state, in the state of human existence, compared with the misery of the denizens of hell, the hungry ghosts and so on. So, this slight misery is sufficient to make us discontented with Samsara, but not sufficient, not great enough to overpower us completely.

So, "discontent with Samsara and compassion towards all sentient beings are born". Because you can see that sentient beings are suffering, but if you're suffering yourself too much, you're just unable to feel compassion for others. You're too unable to think about others. But just because there's this slight misery in the Samsara, you can be discontented with the Samsara for yourself and also feel compassion for others. "And their haughtiness is curbed". How does that come in? How is it that "haughtiness is curbed"? Just by this slight suffering? Slight misery of the human state?

Dhammadinna: Well, you realize that if you suffer, others suffer also. You don't feel so removed, so superior.

S: I'm not sure whether 'haughtiness' is a good word here. I think it's referring to something that's been mentioned a number of times in the scriptures. That is the Three Intoxications. There's the intoxication with youth, there's an intoxication with health and there's the intoxication with beauty. Yes? (Pause) The word 'intoxication' can be translated 'infatuation'. Sometimes you find some young people are really full of the fact that they are young. They're not old. They're sort of infatuated with their own youth or their own youthfulness and that shows itself in the fact that they despise, or they look down on old people. Do you see what I mean? They think that youth is everything. Youth is where it's at. If you're not young, well, you're nobody. They overvalue their own youth. Because, yes, they are young, and it's great to be young, but you know, their youthfulness is such that they become over exuberant over it, even intoxicated and attach too much importance to it and because of that they don't value any other state. They look down on it in fact. They despise it. So you see the sort of thing I'm talking about?

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In the same way, you can be intoxicated with your health. "I'm always healthy, and well, anyone who is not healthy - they're just being stupid, they're just a hypochondriac". You're just intoxicated with your own health; your rude, gross, physical health. You're always sort of making a point of it, how healthy you are. You never fall ill! As though being healthy is a sort of virtue. Do you know the sort of thing I mean? So that, you know, if anyone is ill, if anyone is sick, well, it must be their fault. There's something 'wrong' with them; even morally 'wrong' with them.

I mean, it's the same way with beauty. You can see this in the case of women, it's their sort of actual beauty, - you know, they can get really intoxicated with this. In the case of men, it's very often their strength, their physique and all that type of thing. So they over-estimate this. They over-value this; almost inflict it on other people, that, well, they're very good looking - that they're very strong and you know, they're got a very well-developed physique and all the rest of it. So these are the three sort of intoxications and the Buddha says, referring to His own early spiritual experience, that when He saw the old man and then the intoxication of youth died down in Him. Because of course, he realized He would become old.

When he saw the sick man, the intoxication of health and what was the other one? When he saw the corpse, that was, what was the other intoxication? (Dhammadinna: Beauty or strength) Strength, yes. That died down in Him. So, one might say that 'haughtiness' refers to something like this - intoxication or infatuation.

I mean, yes, it's a great thing you know, to be a human being, but you could get a bit intoxicated with it and the fact that there is a slight misery mixed up with it, a sort of imperfection, it curbs that. It prevents you glorying too much in your human state. Yes, 'glorying' is a good term. You

'glory' in your youth, you glory in your health, you glory in your beauty or your strength. In the same way, you can glory, in a somewhat negative way, in the fact that you are human. Or you would be able to if it was not for the fact of this slight misery that invades the human state. You're made aware of its limitations, that there is something beyond.

Vajrasuri: Such people think they're going to live forever. (S: Yes) This is the state of ignorance.

Linda: Because intoxication is a very strong word really. I mean, if you're intoxicated with something, it affects your whole state.

S: Yes, right. You lose your mindfulness. Do you actually see, [40] nowadays, people who are intoxicated with their youth? Or health and beauty?

A Voice: You see it very much in people who go to Yoga things.

S: Ah, really? Is that so? That's interesting. What else could one be intoxicated with?

Megha: I've caught myself being intoxicated with being energetic around the restaurant and enjoying moving fast and doing things quickly. But what it's doing really is setting up quite a jarring atmosphere, which is not conducive to calm. (S: Yes, right) And I realized why I did that. It was because I actually really enjoyed - I was actually getting caught up in the sensation of what my body was experiencing.

S: Yes. There's an element of unawareness that creeps in, doesn't it? And then also, a sort of sense of superiority creeps in when you think: "Well other people aren't like me.' They haven't got the same health, strength and energy and beauty and so on" So, you sort of use it to almost, well, not exactly attack them - that's too strong a word, but you almost, what shall I say ?

Linda: Undermine them?

S: Undermine them do you think? You inflict it upon them. You inflict your health, beauty, strength and so on and energy upon them.

Dhammadinna: And your intelligence, your eloquence, your ability to talk. (S: Yes, yes. Right) We were talking about charismatic people. They're intoxicated by their charisma.

S: Ah, yes, right. I think very often they are. That is true.

Vajrasuri: They experience it as some form of power, and they become intoxicated by the power of it.

S: Yes. Well, you remember Disraeli's famous remark about Gladstone? He said: "The Right Honourable Gentleman is intoxicated by the exuberance of his own verbosity." (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: You could be intoxicated by any one of your talents, I suppose.

[41]

S: Yes, any, admittedly positive quality. No, I don't think you could be intoxicated with your own mindfulness. I think that would be a contradiction in terms. Reminds me of a story about a gathering of different Orders of Monks - Christian Monks in France, I think it was, in Paris. Each Order, or representative of each Order was talking about what they were particularly good at. So in the end a Franciscan got up and he said: "Well, it's true, the Dominicans are really best when it comes to learning and the Jesuits are really best when it comes to education, but" he said, "when it comes to humility, we Franciscans are tops". (Laughter) So you can't really be tops in humility

and in the same way you can't be intoxicated with your own awareness. The two are just mutually exclusive.

A Voice: That's the difference between rejoicing in merit and being intoxicated isn't it?

S: Ah, yes, yes, right. You can rejoice in your own merit - that's positive, but to be intoxicated with (someone), that's unskilful. (Pause)

So our intoxication is curbed, our haughtiness is curbed, our infatuation is curbed with the human state itself. Just by virtue of the fact that, yes, there is at least, a slight amount of misery in human existence. Well, you know this when things are going well for people they tend to become unmindful, they really do. Have you noticed? They tend to become a bit intoxicated. They get a bit beyond themselves as we say. They become too full of themselves. They become a bit intolerable with regards other people and then something happens to pull them up short. Something goes wrong, some disaster. They lose all their money, or their wife dies, or runs away.

Vajrasuri: Or they run out of energy.

S: Or they run out of energy. Yes, some disaster strikes and then they realize that they're human after all. I mean, the Greeks called this sort of attitude, ('hubris' - 'hykos'?), didn't they? which we often translate as pride, but it's more like this haughtiness, but it's more like pride in the ordinary sense. It's an overweeningness, a forgetfulness of the limitations of the mortal self. When men start thinking that they're gods, then, well, then you're on the brink of disaster.

Vajrasuri: Men do think that though ...

S: The gods won't tolerate that. (Pause)

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S: But the fact that misery is inseparable from human existence, it cures (?) this sooner or later. So, it's a great advantage, otherwise you'd go on getting more and more intoxicated, more and more haughty, more and more intolerant, more and more insufferable. But all right, everything seems to be going so well, then your doctor tells you you've got cancer. Yes? Something like that. Mortality strikes. You're reminded that you're human after all. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: It really is a waste of energy if you're haughty isn't it?

S: Yes, yes.

Vajrasuri: It seems as though what's necessary when kind of an energy builds up that somehow it must come back, mustn't be blown away or thrown away, it must ...

S: It must be harmonized, integrated, and you must retain your awareness - that's the essential thing.

Paula: What sort of practise can you actually do for that state? Because what I've noticed if I get intoxicated, I'm losing awareness of other people and not that receptive.

S: Well, it's very difficult to know what to do, because the mere fact that you're in that state means you can't do very much about it. In a way, you almost have to wait for life itself to give you a bit of a jolt, and bring you to your senses or maybe a spiritual friend. But in that sort of state you may not even listen to the spiritual friend, unless he or she speaks very, very strongly or sternly.

Vajrasuri: What you could try and do is help to train yourself by repeatedly making the same mistake and then saying to yourself, "Now next time remember, when you're in that intoxicated state" and try and do that over and over again.

S: This is why in some cultures, or when someone is about to be crowned, or have some sort of triumph or something like that, in the procession there's a man standing behind him and every now and then giving him a blow.

Anyway, "And while refraining from evil deeds we delight in whatever is good and wholesome". What's the connection? Between that and the fact that there is some misery? In human existence?

[43]

Rosie Anderson: The emphasis is on the positive?

Rosie Ong: You needn't contribute to the misery of the world?

S: Yes, the fact that there is misery, some misery in human existence reminds you of the limitations in Samsara, of mundane existence itself. So you start looking beyond that. On that account you start taking "delight in whatever is good and wholesome". Whatever will help you to go beyond the Samsara. (Pause)

So the Bodhicaryavatara summarizes the matter by saying: "Still another value of misery, that is the slight misery of human existence, is that discontent dispels one's haughtiness that compassion towards beings in Samsara is born; and that one abstains from evil and delights in the good and wholesome". Thus these four forms of existence do not present a unique occasion." (Pause) All right, next paragraph:

Dawn: "It may, however, be noted that although the members of the border tribes are human beings, they are spoken of as unsuited, because it is difficult to find a decent man among them." (Laughter)

S: What is meant by 'a decent man' then? (Laughter) Ah, there's a long note on that one,- I'll just read it, shall I? The Tibetans say: "'To be born in the tribal area is an unfavourable condition for practising the Dharma, because there the doctrine of the Buddha does not obtain. On. 12b a more exhaustive explanation is given: kLa.klo is a designation of the inhabitants of any of the thirty-two border regions beginning with kLo.kha.khra. It is the habit of the kLa.klo to call killing a virtue and so they count the slaughter of living beings as something good. Although the kLa.klos of the border regions look like human beings, their minds do not work properly and so they cannot be turned toward the Noble Doctrine. Those who marry their mothers, following an evil practice of their ancestors, live a life contrary to the Dharma. Since it is a rule that those who live a life of vice by being highly expert in killing living beings, hunting deer and so forth, go into lower forms of existence, the status of being a tribesman is an unfavourable condition." And then Padmakalpa remarks: "With respect to their doctrines the tribesmen are tigers and leopards; with respect to their countries they are wild hordes and, though they appear in human form, like animals they do not know what may and must not be done.'

So, "it may however, be noted, that although the members of the border tribes are human beings, they are spoken of as unsuited because it is difficult to find a decent man among them".

Debbie: Kind of uncultured.

S: Uncouth. On the other hand, one has to be a little careful because if you start thinking of human beings as being not really human beings, then you might develop yourself, a rather unskilful attitude [44] towards them. It could be that fact, it is said that among animals, animals

do not, in their natural state - I mean animals of the same species - do not kill one another. It's only human beings who kill one another. They're the only animal species ... (End of Side A)

(Beginning of Side B) ... under natural conditions. I mean, sometimes animals kill one another, incidentally, when fighting for a mate. Like a deer may kill another deer. Yes? But that is, as it were, incidental to the obtaining of the female. But you don't find deer going around just killing other deer, in the way that human beings go around just killing other human beings.

Annie Fowler: In fact a lot of animals actually have rituals, when they get to a point when one has overcome the other, and they perform this ritual act and the other animal lets it go.

S: Yes, yes, right. That's true. An act of sort of submission. Well you get sort of equivalents of that amongst human beings. The handshake is supposed to be something like that. It's to show you haven't got a sword or a knife in your hands. Look, I'm not going to stab you. Yes? (Pause).

Paula: That's the thing, human beings are the only species capable of cold-blooded murder.

S: Yes. Yes.

Paula: I can't see how anybody could kill anybody else in that sort of way. I mean, if they're actually aware of what they're doing. Without ...

S: Well, perhaps all murder is pathological. Well, for some people their minds don't work properly. (Pause). It's said that more murders are committed by men than by women, and that women, when they murder, usually murder for reasons of passion.

Vajrasuri: There's more murders committed within families than outside of it too.

S: That's true. Yes. Well, I mean, that's where feelings, passions, are strongest, more violent. (Pause).

Daphne: I read something extraordinary a little while ago which seemed to indicate that whales, for example, have compassion because they go to rescue a beached whale, and they stay there until the whale has either died, they have to keep it upright or it will drown. Even if they die themselves they still stay there, until it's either ...

S: It's really extraordinary. (Pause). Anyway, with regard to this question of the border tribes, maybe nowadays it's not so much that you've got definite groups of people that can be identified as border [45] tribes in this sense. But distributed throughout the general population there are, you know, people that fall within this category. Sometimes, you know, on the lower levels of society, sometimes in the higher levels of society. People who are, in fact, barbarians. (Pause). Anyway, next paragraph.

Greta: "Those with erroneous views are equally unsuited, because they do not recognize that the good and wholesome is the cause of the temporal happiness of heaven and the ultimate bliss of liberation."

S: Yes. So to have, don't forget the context, "erroneous views", micchaditthis, is one of the eight unfavourable conditions, and your precious human body is not really a precious human body unless you're free from this unfavourable condition also. That is to say, of holding erroneous views. (Pause). "Because they do not recognize that the good and wholesome is the cause of the temporal happiness of heaven and the ultimate bliss of liberation." In a way, they don't recognize the law of cause and effect, the law of conditionality, the law of karma. (Pause). They don't recognize the possibility of spiritual progress. This is what it really boils down to. They don't

recognize that it is possible for man to obtain a higher state of development, whether a temporary higher state, or a permanent higher state. This is the basic micchaditthi one might say: that individual development is not possible. (Pause). So, if you have that strong micchaditthi, yes?, that individual development is not possible, then, even though you've got a human body it's not, so to speak, a precious human body. Because you're not going to make the best use of it. You don't see it as an opportunity of attaining a higher state, because you don't recognize the existence of a higher state, or the possibility of attaining it. So, to you, the precious human body is not precious. It's just a human body. Do you see the point? (Pause). Do you think nowadays, especially in the West, this particular erroneous view, this particular micchaditthi, is really widely prevalent?

Vajrasuri: Oh, so widely. It's just incredible. Horrible. I can feel it in myself.

S: It's really sad in a way isn't it? I mean, if this is the principal, in a sense, the only erroneous view, the real micchaditthi, that it is not possible for human beings to develop, well, presumably this is the micchaditthi that one ought to be combating most. One ought to be going around telling people that, explaining to people, convincing people that human beings can grow, human beings can develop. What is growth? What is development? How it is possible, why it is possible. I mean, this is the basic point one has to make, otherwise [46] it's not very useful talking about meditation or Buddhist philosophy. Or Buddhism itself, until you've combated, and overcome this basic micchaditthi. That you can grow. Well, first of all you've got to establish that you can change. You can change, and you can change for the better. That change for the better is what we call growth and development, and it is possible. There are methods, there is a way. A lot of people, I think we get so used to these ideas within the FWBO we forget that outside they may be totally unknown. I was going to say that they appear totally revolutionary but, no, they don't appear revolutionary, they just appear, more likely, as absurd, as foolish, as impossible.

Marion: It's like the last ditch argument, 'Well, you can't change human nature'.

S: Right and it's said with an air of satisfaction.

Dhammadinna: It sounds like nihilism in a sense.

A voice: What?

Dhammadinna: Nihilism, a reduction of human life to just, well, to ...

S: Eating and drinking and sleeping and so on.

Dhammadinna: Just to hedonism.

S: You don't even believe very much in hedonism either. You go about in a sort of half-hearted way. Or, even though you're hedonistic in philosophy, you may be left with feelings of guilt, yes? which prevent you being even a proper hedonist. (Laughter). Some of you, I think, would love to be hedonists, but your inhibitions don't ... (Laughter). We really seem to be getting a lot out of the study today. (Laughter).

Marion: It rings very true.

S: It's as though people really ought to go around telling people, "Wake up, you can grow, you can develop. You don't have to be the way you are Rosie Anderson: I think that comes from Christian attitudes as well, doesn't it? That you ...

S: Yes, because Christianity doesn't speak in terms of growth and development, but in terms of

salvation. You believe something and you're transferred, as it were, bodily to heaven. As you are, so to speak, the only difference is that you're now 'saved'. (Laughter). You've been deposited in the right place. (Pause).

Vajrasuri: You just get the feeling of this awful chewing-gum that's just stuck them there.

S: Is it like that in Sydney too?

[47]

Vajrasuri: Oh yes, it's the animal realm and the asura realm. That's Australia. (Pause).

S: I remember when I was travelling around in New Zealand, I was crossing over on the ferry from North Island to South Island, and there were some Australians aboard. Among them there was an Australian woman. She really stood out among the New Zealand women. I mean I don't really like to describe her, but she was such a type, such a character. She must have been about sixty, and heavily made-up. A fag in her mouth (laughter), a drink in her hand, loud-mouthed. It was extraordinary. I really looked at this specimen of the Australian female. (Laughter). The things that she was saying I won't even repeat. (Laughter). Is it true? (Laughter).

Vajrasuri: Yes. (Laughter).

S: I really, well, I hope I didn't stare, but ... (Laughter).

A voice: She probably thought you were admiring her. (Laughter).

S: No, I don't think she even noticed me. (Pause). Maybe we should concentrate more on young people, school children. Go round the schools, give talks. I think that one must remember that this idea needs to be made clear. Perhaps to begin with. Why am I talking about Buddhism? What is Buddhism? It's a means of change and development. Human beings can change, they can develop. Then go into that. (Pause). Otherwise you're sort of jumping the gun a bit. Do you see what I mean? You haven't connected.

Vajrasuri: It's very difficult, because then you've got young people, intoxicated with youth, and they're going to make it and they're going to have a car and a motor bike, and all the rest of it. They're not interested in change and development. They know what they're going to do.

S: Ah. Yes. Yes.

A voice: I think some could be ...

S: Yes. Some could be. Yes. I think quite a few could be. Quite a big minority perhaps.

Linda: I mean if you could do it, it would be very valuable if they could channel the energy that would be going into making it, to getting a car and a motor bike into changing their lives.

S: Well, I mean, ask them, 'Do you see that the people who've got these things are really happy? Are your parents really happy?' Just ask them. They'll probably say, 'Well of course not'. (Laughter) 'They've just got divorced'. (Laughter). Or something like that. [48] Or 'We don't have parents any more'. (Pause). But, anyway, I really feel this, quite strongly in England sometimes. It's so dull and settled. In a nice sort of way, they're not bad or wicked people, trouble is they're just good. (Laughter). In a negative sort of way. In India you really feel things are on the move, especially among the Buddhists, the ex-Untouchables. You know, they have grasped this fact that it is possible to change things. They started off with their social conditions, they don't have to be

downtrodden. They don't have to be treated as Untouchables. They can insist on being treated in another way. They can live a different sort of life. Some of them, even comparatively young people, people, say, in early middle age, have seen absolutely tremendous changes take place in their lifetime. Tremendous. (Pause). I mean, all those changes in question, are between, the middle ages, at their worst, and the twentieth century. Like that. They've experienced it themselves. There's one of our Order Members in Poona, a man in early middle age, who, as a child, used to just go from house to house, of the caste Hindus, as an Untouchable, just collecting his share of leavings of food. This is all that they had to subsist on. They worked, for the higher caste people, and were given cast off clothing and leavings of food. They weren't allowed to have anything else. They were never given much and he remembers, as a boy of seven and eight going and collecting leavings. Now he's Western-educated, he's got a decent job, lives in a nice bungalow, he's teaching in a college, but he remembers this. Another Order Member recently, I heard, some of you may know about this, he was talking in the course of an Order 'reporting in' about his early life, his childhood as an Untouchable, and he hadn't been talking for more than a minute or two and he just burst into tears. It was such an awful recollection. The experience he had. But now, here he is, fifty years later, in a quite different sort of situation. A member of the Order, functioning in a quite different sort of a way. These people really know that change is possible, they've seen it, and they believe that more change is possible.

Dhammadinna: A lot of that is outer change, isn't it, social change?

S: Well, it is but it's still in a way qualitative, to a better way of life. It's not, you know, just having two cars instead of one. Or just a somewhat bigger house. It's not on that sort of level. The change is so great that it amounts to a qualitative change. A change in the quality of life.

Dhammadinna: Whereas in Western society there seems to be a, although the material things have got better, there's a feeling that the [49] quality of life has got worse, and then the material things are getting worse as well so you've got two ...

S: One gets a very curious 'run-down' feeling in England. Coming back from India, I mean, they're on a lower level materially, but they're moving up from that lower level quite vigorously. So there is a feeling of movement upwards, a feeling of improvement that you don't get here. That gives a certain life and optimism to things, a certain exhilaration even. It's quite odd, that I mean, certainly wherever I went, that they seemed more alive than they do in this country. I mean, maybe it's a bit of a world of the gods. Rather sleepy sort of gods.

Daphne: It seems to me, when I've been talking to friends in Education, that students are much more concerned with getting a job, and a car and so on, than they were when I was at university. There was more optimism then. We ...

S: Much more idealism.

Daphne: Yes. We felt we could change the world.

S: Well, perhaps people have become a bit disillusioned about changing the world, because perhaps they went the wrong way about it. Or thought about it in the wrong sort of terms. (Pause). I think we are experiencing a swing of the pendulum. It's going, I think, a bit in the opposite direction. I think we shall have to go around much more stirring them up. Beating the drum, as it were.

Linda: It's curious though, because, certainly within a generation people have been through a war, which must have been an incredible disturbance in their lives. It's as though, you know that ...

S: But younger people haven't. Younger people ...

Linda: But their parents have. It seems odd that it didn't have more effect on their parents in a way. Well, not odd, but that it seems not to be part of their consciousness, that that actually happened. It was part of their experience. I mean, very many of their friends and relatives must have died.

Dhammadinna: I think that's a part of it. People, after the war, felt that they wanted to settle down and rebuild a material society and that was possible in the post war years of the fifties and sixties. People did actually build a better standard of living and then you hit a recession and you get disillusionment because you feel everything is possible for you on that level, and then it isn't.

S: Well, for a long time people did believe that things were going to get better and better and better materially. I mean, this was the [50] old Victorian philosophy of progress, which lasted a long time. I think, you know, we are seeing that on it's last legs. We've seen that, that philosophy, lose its hold.

Dhammadinna: A great insecurity is, actually, I think, the result of that.

S: That was a sort of substitute for religious faith, that at least things were going to get materially better and better.

Annie Fowler: Maybe that's why Christianity is on the up again?

S: Yes. Pie in the sky when you die. (Laughter). To make up for the lack of pie on earth. (Laughter). (Pause).

Dhammadinna: Do you think it's an unfavourable condition to be trying to be a Buddhist in a recession? (Laughter).

S: It's conducive to greater simplicity of life. No, I think we're in a very favourable situation. We've got leisure, we've got our health and strength, we've got contact with the Dharma. I think we shouldn't underestimate that by any means. But we do need to bestir ourselves more and more and make better use of our opportunities. Share them, much more vigorously and effectively with other people. At least make known to other people that, you know, such possibilities of growth and development do exist for human beings. (Pause). All right, next little paragraph.

Linda: "He who is born in a world where there is no Buddha is equally unsuited, because there is no one to show him what is, and what is not, to be done".

S: A lot of people wouldn't like that way of putting it would they? Being shown what is and what is not to be done. But, actually, very often, people do need to have things pointed out to them. I mean, sometimes, you find when people, when things are pointed out to them, well, then they can understand. They could not have come to that understanding just by themselves. (Pause). I mean, this may be what genius consists of to some extent. The ability to point something out to other people which they were not able to see for themselves. You've got that extra something that enabled you to see it whereas they couldn't. But they can see it if you point it out. (Pause). I mean, that's the difference between the Buddha and the Arhants, say. The Buddha could see which was the right path for Himself. Others could see it if He pointed it out, but they couldn't discover it for themselves. I mean, it's just like that in the arts. You may not be able to compose a poem, but once someone has composed a poem, well, you are able to appreciate it, to read it, understand it. (Pause). Benefit.

[51]

Greta: Also, sometimes you can't quite see what you yourself are doing. You can't quite see the consequences of it and a good friend can.

S: Yes - yes. That's true. (Pause) So, to be born into a world where there is no Buddha means, you know, to be born into a world where there's no one to show the way. You, yourself being incapable of finding it, or at least discovering it for yourself. Even though, you are capable of following it when it is pointed out. A lot of people are in this position. In a way, we're all in that position, aren't we? If there had been no such thing as Buddhism, could we have invented it? No. But at least, now that it has been invented and made available to us, we can have some understanding of it and begin to practise it.

So that's why we mustn't, as it were, 'glory' in Buddhism, in the sense that, you know, we're proud of it in a rather unskilful sort of way, almost as though we discovered it ourselves, or invented it ourselves because that's not the case. It's been made available to us. So our attitude should be more one of intensive gratitude. We haven't had to find it all out for ourselves. The Path has been shown to us by the Buddha and all His Enlightened disciples down the ages. They've made it easy for us - they've explained it, in detail very often. Even people like Gampopa explained it. They've made it so very easy for us. All we have to do is just practise. The Path is mapped out, laid out, stage by stage, in detail. It's like being ushered on to a luxury train. All we have to do is step on to it. It'll take us there. It's a bit like that.

But it's difficult enough to practise, difficult enough to follow the Path, but how much more difficult to discover the Path. So, therefore, it is said, "He who is born in a world where there is no Buddha, is equally unsuited because there is no one to show him what is, and what is not to be done. Very often people who are reasonably positive are happy to be shown what is to be done. Very often children are like that, they're quite happy to be told, what is and what is not to be done. If they're brought up properly and are reasonably positive. They like there to be definite guidelines, which are not arbitrary, but are based on the experience of the society, their elders. (Pause)

All right, last one: last of these conditions:

Annie Murphy: "So are the stupid, because they are unable to know for themselves what has been said to be good or evil."

[52]

S: So, it's you know, an unfavourable condition if, even if you are born where there is a Buddha, even if the Buddha points out to you what is and what is not to be done, it's an unfavourable condition if you're so stupid you can't understand what has been pointed out to you. 'Stupid' doesn't just mean, 'not intelligent' in the ordinary sense. It means spiritually so; spiritually obtuse. Yes? So that you can't even recognize the Path, as the Path, when it's been pointed out to you. It doesn't mean anything to you. You don't respond, you don't understand. So if you're stupid in that sense, well, that's an unfavourable condition. In that case, if you're stupid, your precious human body is not really a precious human body. It's not a vehicle for the attainment of Enlightenment. It's just a human body.

So, this section concludes, "Thus to be free from the eight unfavourable conditions is a most excellent and unique occasion Yes". That is to say, you're not born as a denizen of hell, not suffering constant pain, you're not born as a preta, you're not tormented by neurotic craving incessantly, you're not born as an animal, you know, dull and blind and stupid, you're not a long-lived god, in any sense, you're not a member of a border tribe, you don't have erroneous views, you're not born in a world where there's no Buddha, and you're not stupid. If you're free from these eight unfavourable conditions, that is a 'most excellent and unique occasion'. You really do have a precious human body then. Yes? That is to say, if you're a human being to begin with. You were born in a civilized community where the Buddha's teaching is known and born intelligent and able to understand that Teaching, that really is a favourable condition, that really is 'an excellent and unique occasion'.

So you might say, in our case, well we've got all those eight favourable conditions. First of all, we're human beings; we're not born among tribal people, so to speak; we've not been born in a totally uncivilized or uncultured society. We don't have erroneous view; we do believe it is possible to develop as human beings. We do have access to the Buddha's Teaching and we are reasonably intelligent. We are able to understand that Teaching to some extent. So here you are, what are you waiting for?!

Vajrasuri: We even know how to practise.

S: Yes, we even know how to practise. You can even explain how to practise to other people. So, how far you've got already - a long way! Maybe two-thirds of the way.

[53]

Voices: Oh really!! (Laughter)

S: Yes. Well, you can't really compare perhaps, but it wouldn't be altogether wrong to say that one was two-thirds of the way there. You're not an animal, you're a human being, yes?

Linda: If you took it over thousands of lifetimes?

S: Well, you might gain Enlightenment in this life itself. Well, maybe it's positive in a sense, to think how near you are to Enlightenment. Not how far you are from it. Yes? It would have been so easy to have been born as a non-human being, but you've been born as a human being. It would have been so easy to have been born among savage and barbarous people, but you've been born in a reasonably civilized and cultured community. It would have been so easy to have been born in an era where Buddhism wasn't accessible. It would have been so easy to have been born stupid and unintelligent, but you haven't been. So, all these chances, well, I won't say a series of accidents but, increment upon increment of good Karma has placed you in this position. You must have some good Karma somewhere in the past, otherwise you just wouldn't be where you are. So just take those few extra steps and gain Enlightenment. (Laughter) Or at least Stream Entry. Don't overvalue the human state. The working basis is the most precious human body. I mean, the human body is very precious. It's like a sort of beautifully carved and decorated chalice that someone has been working on for years and years and making it so beautiful and finely carved. This precious human body is like that. The product of so much good Karma; so much skilful activity, otherwise you wouldn't have this precious human body, wouldn't have all these favourable conditions. (Pause)

Anyway, it's a good point on which to stop, especially as I've got a biscuit in my mouth. (Laughter)

(End of Tape 12)

[54]

S: Well, we've finished the eighth unfavourable condition, and we come on now to right juncture; because there are five headings which relate to the excellent working base, 'unique occasion,' - we've dealt with that under the eight headings, 'right juncture' under five headings. So would someone like to read 'right juncture', page 15?

Debbie: "'Right juncture' refers to five events which affect us directly and to another five occurring through others and affecting us mediately, so that there are a total of ten. The five affecting us directly are:

As a human being to be born in the central country and to possess all senses,
Not to revert to inexpiable evil deeds and to have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life."

S: All right, that's clear. Let's go straight on with the explanation - that's just a list of headings; take them one by one:

Dawn: " 'As a human being' means to have the same fate and fortune as other men and to have either the male or female organs."

S: What do you think this means? 'To have the fate and fortune as other men' - other human beings that is. Why is it not a 'right juncture' to have a different fate and fortune?

Marion: Because it means you'd have a different potentiality and not the same potentiality and fate and fortune?

S: 'Fate and fortune' - in a way those aren't very Buddhistic expressions. Perhaps it means simply to be an average human being. Perhaps it really means no more than that. 'As a human being' means to be born as a human being like other human beings. Perhaps it's a bit tautological, a bit redundant. Do you see what I mean?

But then it says 'And to have either the male or female organs What do you think that means? Why is that considered important?

Megha: It almost sounds like you can be human without the male or female organs.

S: That you can't be?

Megha: That you can be.

S: That you can be?

Voice: Can you be? (Laughter)

[55]

S: Well, it says, 'right juncture' - that the first of the five events which constitute 'right juncture' - which affect us directly are: 'to have the same fate and fortune as other men and to have either the male or female organs'. That is to say, if you don't have either the one or the other, you are not strictly speaking a human being. So what in fact is being said? What does this mean? Why is this considered important?

Voice: Doesn't make any difference whether a man or a woman?

S: No, but in a sense it suggests that. But ...

Vajrasuri: Making clear that you be born in a male form or in a female form. That it be a clear distinction and not a confusion.

S: Not a confusion, yes. There is in fact a rule, a Vina rule, that to be ordained as a bhikkhu, a monk or to be ordained as a bhikkhuni - a nun, you must be in the case of the one to be ordained a bhikkhu, definitely a male human being. If you are to be ordained a bhikkhuni, a nun, definitely a female human being - any confusion of gender is regarded as a sort of expression of psychological confusion which may mean you're not fitted, so to speak, for the spiritual life. This is the traditional Buddhist teaching. Do you see what I mean? So do you think there is any, so to speak, real basis in it? What do you think it's really getting at?

Dhammadinna: If one aspect of the spiritual life is that you're trying to unify opposites, you can't do that unless you're clear where you start from. You can't do that psychologically and the

psychological is connected with the biological.

S: Right, yes. You don't unify the opposites, if that is what you're thinking of doing by sort of blurring the distinction between them on which they actually do exist. Do you see what I mean?

Annie Murphy: But Bhante, if as does happen, we do have hermaphrodites, presumably that wouldn't bar them from the spiritual life, just that it would be more complex for them. Or would it, do you feel bar them ...?

S: Well, it is said by medical authorities, that genuine hermaphroditism is quite a rare phenomenon, but nonetheless it does seem [56] - there is some discussion about the meaning of technical terms that certainly in early Buddhism, a hermaphrodite could not be ordained either as a bhikkhu or as a bhikkhuni.

In other words, any sort of confusion of gender - as distinct from gender roles, let us say, is - a gender role being due perhaps to cultural conditioning - is regarded as expressive of a sort of psychological complication - a confusion - which may well get in the way of spiritual life. There is also of course, the purely social side - that is if you're ordained as a bhikkhu, you'll be living with other men, if you're ordained as a bhikkhuni, you'll be living with other women. And if the whole idea of having a bhikkhu-Sangha separate from a bhikkhuni-Sangha is to keep the two sexes separate, well, if you were to ordain hermaphrodites into either, well, that might confuse the issue. Under early Buddhism, according to the Vinaya, an hermaphrodite is not eligible for ordination.

Dhammadinna: But was that just a social thing or was it also psychological in that it might be difficult for them to practise?

S: Yes, the suggestion seems to be that for such people it is difficult to practise. One explanation of that is that there is - this is perhaps just an explanation - a sort of confusion of energies. Do you see what I am getting at? But certainly traditionally Buddhism proceeds with caution at least, in the case of people with whom there is a sort of gender confusion, as distinct from - as I said - gender role. If for instance in one culture women wear skirts and in another culture men wear skirts, that is purely convention and nothing to do with actual gender identity.

Dhammadinna: But does that also apply to people who aren't maybe hermaphrodite biologically - indeterminate - but who are quite strongly confused about what they want to be? I mean, there are transsexuals and ...

S: I think in Buddhism, in early Buddhist texts, there are some few accounts of men becoming women and of women becoming men, spontaneously, not as a result of surgical interference. So the phenomenon was known, but not to any great extent. But I think nonetheless, the traditional view would be that confusions in that sort of area will lead to confusions psychologically and it can carry over into spiritual life. I think from a traditional point of view, Buddhism would be very concerned about some of our present day confusions, in this area. [57] I think one could at least say that.

Vajrasuri: You mean present day confusions in the West in that area?

S: In the West, yes.

Rosie Ong: What about people who are sort of gay.

S: Well, that is sort of psychological rather than biological. In the case of people who are 'gay' or who regard themselves as 'gay', very often there is confusion there too. And that would mean in

some cases there isn't! But to the extent there is confusion in this area whether on the biological level or whether on the psychological level, it would seem to create difficulties.

Linda: I think if you have that problem, if you have that confusion, it must be a really major preoccupation. You couldn't really sort of get through it to the spiritual path (S: Yes, right), because you'd be almost continually confused and unhappy and wondering what you actually were because you wouldn't feel right.

S: So to put it in more positive terms, I think the traditional Buddhist view would be that from the spiritual point of view, from the point of view of spiritual development, you are better off if your starting point is that of definitely, a healthy fully male human being or a positive complete healthy female human being. Do you see what I mean? That either point of departure is valid. But that if you're confused, that creates a complication that perhaps makes it more difficult for you to get started. I think that would be a fair presentation of the traditional Buddhist view.

Rosie Ong: It sounds like an idea that some people put forward, that if women have sex with other women, then they can stop themselves from sort of projecting so much or whatever it is.

S: Well, I think there is the possibility, even so of projecting on to other women. Do you see what I mean? That is psychologically possible. Maybe then you won't be projecting on to men but I think women do fall in love with one another and that means there is projection. So I don't think you escape from projection, simply by preoccupying yourself with other women; it's not so easy. (Laughter)

[58]

S: I mean, you know, there can be projection without any kind of sexual connection - it's also independent psychological phenomenon or psychological occurrence. Well, I mean young girls often get infatuated with women teachers in school. That's projection - at least there's an element of projection in it. So you don't escape from projection in that way.

So from the Buddhist point of view, it is rather unfortunate that nowadays in the West there is all this confusion and uncertainty about sexual identity and whatever. It doesn't help and it certainly complicates things. (If you're) trying to start living a spiritual life which means to develop as an individual - you've got some extra confusion to sort out. Suppose you weren't sure whether you were a boy or a girl, a man or a woman. It would be very confusing, not only psychologically but even spiritually.

Rosie Ong: Is it something about energies? Is there such a thing as different energies?

S: Yes, perhaps it is largely a matter of terminology. I am a bit wary of this sort of idea that there are different types of energy around. I tend to think, well, energy is basically one; psychophysical energy is one. But there is no doubt that there are different ways in which the energy can operate.

It does seem - and here I hope I am not generalizing too much, that in the case of women - those who are completely biologically and psychologically women - energy operates in one way, and in the case of men in another way. Do you see what I mean? So if you're a sort of mixture of the two - a mixture as distinct from a harmony of the two on a higher level, it's a though there's no sort of consistency, in the way that your energy functions. Do you see what I mean?

Vajrasuri: Could you say that again or just elaborate on it?

S: Well, let us suppose - for the sake of example - that the energy of men operates in a more outwardgoing way, a more adventurous way, whereas the energy of women operates in a more - what shall I say circling-upon-itself way, in a more circling way, a more nurturing way - I am not

saying that it is necessarily so - let us give these two as examples - well then if you are working consistently in one way or consistently in the other or your energy is operating consistently in this way or consistently in that, then there is a certain [59] uniformity and continuity in your approach, but if you don't sort of know how you're functioning or how you're supposed to function, sometimes it's in this way, sometimes it's in that way, then that can lead to confusion. Do you see what I mean?

I am giving the two examples only as examples. But anyway, this is one explanation which has been given in terms of a sort of mixture of two different kinds or two different modes of functioning of energy.

Vajrasuri: Would you care to make a wild generalization and say you think that's how women's energies do operate - in a circular nurturing way?

S: I think they do operate in a different way, - I am quite sure of that - but it is very difficult to provide a satisfactory model, so to speak, for the way in which the different energies of men and of women operate. I mean, that's why I qualified that so heavily I am not satisfied that that is a satisfactory model, but certainly there does seem to be a difference in the way which the energies operate.

Paula: If in the process of growing you are trying to unify the opposites, I mean, should you not be trying to develop the ability to function in either way?

S: Yes, but it's a question of, as Dhammadinna has said at the beginning, of really developing and unifying, not mixing or confusing or blurring in an undeveloped state - that is the real point. For instance, sometimes on a more psychological level, you hear talks, say, on men, about: they have to get in touch with their femininity or among women, they've got to get in touch with their masculinity. But some men need to get more in touch with their masculinity first, before they start trying to get in touch with their femininity and vice versa. Some women need to get more fully in touch with their femininity and then try to get in touch, so to speak, with their masculinity.

Rosie Ong: When you talk about harmony, with the two different (modes) operating, do you mean you still operate in two ways depending on the circumstances or ... ?

S: Hmm, yes and no. By harmony I mean in this sort of sense, that you reach a sort of higher level, or higher mode of operating which [60] is in a way, neither the one nor the other but blends the two. But when circumstances require, yes, you are capable so to speak, of operating in that situation in what may appear to be a one-sided manner but not because you are limited to that particular way of operating, but simply you utilize that because the situation requires it, even though you yourself may be a completely balanced person. Not every situation may necessarily call for the exercise of all your talents, so to speak. Just a selection of them may be sufficient. Do you see what I mean? So it isn't a question of having both at your disposal, not utilising one, now utilising the other. No, you reach a higher level where they are unified. But a particular situation may require you to operate through one, or another of those modes of functioning. Anyway, I hope this isn't getting too abstract.

Vajrasuri: It's a very important point, that they are not just side by side, they're actually unified.

S: Yes. They are not just conjoined externally, they're really unified and integrated.

Dhammadinna: So you respond appropriately to different situations, and it may be in one or the other way.

S: Yes, right. It may appear to others that you are operating, let's say, in this case in a predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine way, but so far as you are concerned, you are just ...

Dhammadinna: ... being you.

S: Being you, as an integrated, as it were, androgynous individual psychologically androgynous individual, just responding to circumstances. You don't feel, "Oh now I am being very masculine or now I am being very feminine". You are aware of the particular mode of functioning but you are just you.

Dhammadinna: If there is that kind of gender confusion, not on the biological level, but psychological which I think is where it affects most people - when you say you've got to start from your base. If you are confused, it's difficult to know.

S: Well, you have to first of all find what is your base.

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Dhammadinna: Yes to clarify, don't you? (S: Yes) I mean you may not be able to distinguish too much between different types of energy and just be confused, as to what really being a woman or really being a man is. And I suppose in a way, perhaps the process of meditation itself, to begin with, would may be begin to sort that out as it puts you more in touch with yourself.

S: Well, yes. It helps you to see things more clearly; maybe put you in touch with your feelings.

Dhammadinna: Do you think that's also a function of spending time with your own sex, that you might learn what that's all about ...

S: Provided you are clear as to what is your own sex. (Dhammadinna: Yes) (Laughter) Maybe you've got to clarify that first, in some cases. Or at least really feel at one with your own sex. There are some women who feel you know, not very much at home in the company of other women and some men who feel not very much at home in the company of other men, as though they don't have much in common with them.

Dhammadinna: So would you say that was a confusion?

S: It can be. It could be a confusion but sometimes it could be that in the first case, the woman is, let's say, a more masculine type of woman, quite naturally. There is no confusion. She is just that and she feels that; doesn't enjoy women's company particularly. The same let's say, of a more feminine man who doesn't particularly enjoy men's company and conversation. Because I mean, despite the trend in the discussion so far, - it's not as though you have in fact just got female women and male men, there's a whole intermediate range. But you need to know where you stand in this respect and proceed from there. That seems to be the basic message.

You may have been just confused by your culture. You may have been utterly confused by your upbringing, by your ideology and so on. So it seems you need to sort that out.

Annie Murphy: Would it be all right, Bhante, not to really bother to sort out whether you are a more masculine woman or whatever but you did have a really positive response to the fact that that was your gender - that you were a male, that that was all right, that was really good and just get on with it rather than ...

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S: I think in many cases you need to feel that whatever you are it's OK, provided it's a sort of

natural phenomenon and not just brought about by social and cultural conditioning and distortion. As if to say, "well if that is the way nature made me, well, that's OK, that's my starting point. If nature made me a very very female woman, OK that's my starting point. Nothing wrong in that!. If on the other hand nature made me a rather masculine woman, I am naturally that, well, never mind! That's my starting point. That's me. I go forward from here."

Kay: Would she then try to develop her masculine side once she realized that she was naturally a woman, a feminine type?

S: Well, this does raise the question, the difficulty: well [what] do we really mean by masculine and what do we really mean by feminine? Well, we'll be here the rest of the retreat if we got on to that ...! (Laughter) So what can one say? (Voice: Well, just a little!) The masculine woman. What does one mean by the 'masculine woman' usually. Are there such people? What does that mean then?

Dhammadinna: Usually someone who's got more drive and aggressiveness what one labels as that sort of thing ...

S: This seems to mean that men normally have aggressiveness and all those other qualities? Sometimes one means by a 'masculine woman', - one who approximates in appearance to a man - who could be mistaken for a man, in the distance, you know? Who walks like a man, holds herself like a man, yes? no? but sometimes - you seem confused about this. (Laughter and mutterings)

Voice: To me that isn't a masculine woman, that's something else! (Laughter)

S: This is what has been regarded as a 'masculine woman' - she seems to have certain characteristics which are usually regarded as masculine. They may be of course, be characteristics which are masculine only in a quite conventional social sense. I mean, it isn't an essential feature of masculinity that men wear trousers because in some cultures they don't with no prejudice to their masculinity. So if a woman [63] wears trousers, she's not necessarily a masculine woman, but perhaps she may be a woman who wishes to be considered masculine. You see, I think one has to make those sort of distinctions.

Dhammadinna: No wonder we're all confused! (Laughter)

S: In our culture, women seem to have appropriated masculine garments without men having appropriated feminine garments. I mean it's quite in order for a woman to go around in trousers, but it's not in order for men to go around in skirts. Why? There seems to be sexual prejudice somewhere, on somebody's part; not to say discrimination. (Laughter) A woman walks around in trousers and nobody turns a hair. But I can remember and I'm not all that old - that a woman who went out in trousers was considered not quite nice. (Laughter) But I can remember the change that has taken place. I can remember as a boy - I had an aunt who wore trousers inside the house. She didn't go out in them. She wore them inside the house. People were really scandalized. My mother was scandalized. Now my mother at the age of 85 goes out in trousers; (Laughter) doesn't think anything of it. Things have changed. So one has to take that into consideration too. There is you know, what is regarded as a social masculinity and socially feminine - more socially masculine and socially feminine behaviour which doesn't necessarily have much to do with actual psychological masculinity and psychological femininity. But it is rather odd that women are allowed this sort of freedom and men apparently are not.

Dhammadinna: It's almost like if you're a woman, you can explore the range, at least in your dress, even in your behaviour from feminine to masculine within your own gender and that's OK; nobody really bothers about it (S: Yes). But if you're a man, you've got quite a limited

expression, in our society (S: Right) you're considered all sorts of things. You've got only a very narrow way of expressing yourself (S: Narrow range). In that way, women are freer, in a sense.

S: Yes, yes, they are allowed so to speak, greater freedom. Whether they avail themselves of it, that's another matter, but the freedom is there.

Rosie Ong: Bhante, I don't know if I'm mistaken, but it seems to be, in the scriptures, quite a lot of derogatory references to women. They often put women down.

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S: Well, in a way that's true. Maybe there are two things to be borne in mind there. One is that usually in the Scriptures, the Buddha is addressing monks rather than nuns - you know, men rather than women. Second, one has to perhaps examine the meaning of the word 'derogatory'. Because something maybe regarded as 'derogatory' in one culture but not in another.

For instance, in the West, we tend to regard it as derogatory to serve, but in India it's not regarded as derogatory to serve. So if someone from the West goes, say, to India and sees a woman serving her husband in a way that is traditional there, they may think she's being treated as lower; she's being used as a servant. But she does not see it like that. The culture does not think like that. She regards serving, including serving her husband as a noble thing. She enjoys serving. We might think that was a very derogatory thing to do but they wouldn't agree with that.

We have to sort of not confuse our cultures. That what is maybe derogatory in one culture is not regarded as derogatory in another. Do you see what I mean? So there is this factor to be borne in mind, too. Anyway, where does that lead us? I think in more general terms, to come back to this, we have to be very sure what our actual present position is because that is our starting point. We go forward from here.

Ratnadakini: But once we've found our starting point, would it be good to develop the other sides of us ...?

S: Yes, I think once we've found our starting point, we go forward from that. But one aspect of going forward is you know, in the course of our development as an individual, becoming more and more integrated - that is to say, expressing more and more aspects of ourselves so that, in the end, in this particular context, we are at least psychologically androgynous, yes?

It may be that you remain physically male, physically female and function through that particular aspect, but psychologically, you are not limited or confined by it. When you become psychologically androgynous you don't become physically an hermaphrodite. You remain a man or you remain a woman. But your mental attitude, your spiritual attitude changes. You may continue to function as a woman or you may continue to function as a man. But you don't identify yourself exclusively with that particular role so to speak, as perhaps you did formerly. Do you see what I mean?

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Marion: Why do you emphasize the difference of labelling of qualities as masculine or feminine because I personally find that it's very hard to get away from value judgements about it. I find it really confusing ...

S: Well, masculine and feminine are terms which are very widely used so it would seem there is something to which they correspond, yeah?. So if one wants to find alternative terms, well that is open to one. But the terms are very widely current - very often questions are put in these terms.

Marion: They are so loaded with social value judgements though, usually.

S: Yes, mmm.

Annie Murphy: Bhante, was there any spiritual significance in the fact that some men spontaneously became women or women men in the Scriptures or was it just noted that it happened to be a physiological fact?

S: Oh dear, I'm afraid that I only remember one instance. I'm afraid it was a man being transformed into a woman as a punishment. (Laughter - Oh dear!) Yes, I can suggest the story of, I can tell the story if I can remember it correctly: apparently there was a certain man who saw an arahant bhikkhu and that arahant bhikkhu happened to be very good-looking. So the householder formed the wish that that bhikkhu was my wife and as a result of that unskillful thought, he was on the spot transformed into a woman and he had a whole series of adventures as a woman (Laughter) including being married and having children. And he had had children as a father and I think the point of the story was this particular person was consulted as to whether the father was fonder of the children than the mother - whether you are fonder of the children of which you are the father, than of the children of which you were the mother ... So this person was consulted as the authority and said that he/she had actually been fonder of the children of which she had been the mother. That was the reason why all this story was related, so there is that little incident, - this is the only one that I can recall at the moment - there are two or three such incidents, (of that kind).

Rosie Ong: What is there about women that puts them lower on the hierarchy, the spiritual hierarchy?

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S: Well, what is it? Have you any ideas at all?

Rosie Ong: I can't see why!

S: Well, let's put it this way. Even supposing you might not agree with that assessment, can you see any social or cultural factors leading to that assessment being made? And therefore, reflected in Buddhist texts?

Rosie O: Is that traditional? (S: Well, yes)

Rosie: Having babies then. (Laughter)

S: What's wrong with having babies?

Rosie O: It takes up your time.

S: It takes up your time. I think personally it probably has a lot to do with that. Especially in view of the fact that in the past in India or even now in India to some extent, you don't have just one or two babies, you go on having them every year, for the whole of your lifetime. A lot of them die; perhaps you die in childbirth. So from this point of view if you're born as a woman, for the age of 14 or 15, you are going to be pregnant every year and maybe die in child-birth. This is something of a disadvantage. (Laughter) Do you see what I mean? Because very few women were prepared to give up that and just become bhikkhunis. So the Buddha said "yes, the spiritual life is as open to women as it is to men". Because he was asked the question, point-blank by Ananda: "Are women capable of gaining Enlightenment?" and he said, "Yes, they are". But nonetheless it was regarded at that time, as a disadvantage to be born a woman for those sort of reasons, presumably.

Rosie Ong: So if women didn't have babies, then there wouldn't be a difference?

S: Ah, well, it's not quite as simple as that! If you don't have babies or if you don't want to have babies, or if you think that having babies is not so important to you, at least you are to that extent more free. Not that if you have a baby or one or two babies, it's really going to get in the way all the time - but certainly you are going to be somewhat restricted for a few years, and you need to take [67] that into consideration. But you're not going to be permanently shut out from the spiritual path by any means.

Rosie Ong: So there isn't any psychological difference in the way that the energies operate which makes one more suitable for the spiritual life than the other.

S: It would seem not, it would seem not. In the sense that the Buddha did recognize that - well, he stated quite categorically that women are capable of gaining Enlightenment, - when challenged on this point he responded in the affirmative.

Rosie Ong: Why is there few women in the Movement?

S: In the Movement? I thought there was quite a lot of them?

Rosie Ong: Well, compared with men, there's a lot more men.

S: You think so?

Rosie O: Well, a lot more men get ordained anyway.

S: Ah, well why is that?! Well, there you ask a question! If there are as many women in the movement as men - I think there are in some areas there may be a few more - why is it that more men get ordained? Why is it that more men Go for Refuge? Why do you think it is? Is it just say, an accident, or do you think there is an actual explanation?

Rosie O: If you say there is no difference - it makes no difference, then it shouldn't, should it?

S: It shouldn't, no. (Laughter) I agree, that's perfectly clear. I have got a little theory of my own. (Laughter) (Vajrasuri: Let's hear it!!) It is to do with type of energy. I thought about this quite a lot. It offers itself as something one can't help thinking about, because every month or two I ask the women Order members: "Well, is there anyone really ready for Ordination? etc. etc." Well, I urge them on. "Well, go into the matter again. Have another discussion. Talk to such and such Mitras again. See what's holding them back and so on". I can't help sort of thinking about this. But the conclusion that I've come to is that men's and women's energies operate in a different sort of way.

I don't know whether than one can say there are two different [68] kind of energies. That might not be the correct way of putting it. But it does seem to me that men are more capable of summoning up all their energies for a sudden burst of activity and breaking through certain barriers. It seems to me that women aren't so easily able to do that. It's as though they can keep their energies quite steadily and sort of carry on, almost plod on and they get there in the end, but they don't get there so quickly, in certain respects at least, because they aren't able to mobilize all their energies all together and sort of concentrate on that one point and sort of burst through. Do you see what I mean?. I mean this is my personal explanation. You can agree or disagree with it as you like, but this is the only way in which I am able to account for it. It does seem to be borne out broadly speaking.

So I feel that in the case of men, you can drive them more, but in the case of women, it's much more difficult. They won't be driven. They'll go at their own pace. They'll plod on steadily. (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: If they won't be driven, how do they escape being driven?

S: How is it they escape or why is it they don't want to be driven? (Vajrasuri: Yes. Why don't they respond?) I can only explain it by - constitutionally, maybe metaphorically - their energy just functions in a different way. In as much as the Buddha says that women are capable of gaining enlightenment, well, they too can get there in the end. But they seem to get there in a different way or even at a different pace.

Kay: But do you think that is something to do with the way they are being driven by the women Order members then? I mean, maybe the women Order members aren't capable of driving them to ... (Laughter)

S: Well, you might say, yes, or mitras might say that the women Order members aren't able to drive them. But why is it that Women Order members aren't able to drive women mitras whereas men Order members are quite able to drive men mitras? Yeah?

Marion: It could be something to do with the fact that women aren't brought up to being aggressive and then if suddenly they are put in the situation where they have to operate in that way, it sets up a conflict.

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S: I'm not quite sure if it's just a question of aggressiveness. It may be that they are connected but I'm not so sure that it is - that aggressiveness is the sort of thing that I'm talking about. It's more like speed of mobilization of energy. This is what I'm talking about. Supposing you need - let's say for the sake of argument - to get from where you are as a mitra now, let's say to the point of ordination, you've got to mobilize a certain quantity of energy. Let's say that a man is able to mobilize that quantity of energy in a year. It's as though a woman is able to mobilize the same quantity of energy over a longer period. That is to say, more slowly. He can mobilize it in that sort of way, but she will need to mobilize it in that sort of way. Does that click? Or have you got another explanation?

Kay: What would the mobilization of energy consist of? In what way would it be mobilized?

S: Well, it's as though the individual psycho physical organism is just embodied energy. You are energy. And it's as though in fact energy can be brought to bear on some specific project or undertaking or purpose. So 'mobilization of energy' means the summoning up of all your reserves of energy and bringing to bear on to that one issue. Whether it's meditation or whether it's a job of work or running.

I believe that people who have gone into sports and men and women's performance in sports - say that physically - when it comes to things like running, men mobilize their energy more quickly than women - of course, here it's a matter of a difference of a few seconds but there is a difference, so it is said.

Voice: But women though ... (End of side A)

Marion: I don't know about children but with men I think it's conditioned.

S: Well, I mean, their energy is flowing in that particular channel.

Marion: I don't know about children.

S: Well there is a biological evidence too!

Marion: But there is with men towards women as well.

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S: And it does depend upon cultures because, say, in India, where you've got arranged marriages, the energies of young women don't flow towards men in the same way as they do in this country. They just sit quietly planning their wedding. They've got the bridegroom to be provided and he always is provided. They know they've nothing to worry about at all. They just wait happily for that happy day. They really look forward to it. They're overjoyed those little brides I've seen them when I've been blessing the marriage - I've seen them bouncing with joy, not able to hide it, just smiling underneath their saris.

Vajrasuri: Men do seem to confront one another in a much more open confrontation, kind of way, than women seem to. Women seem to encourage one another along the path; men seem to confront one another along the path.

S: But do you say that men don't usually encourage and that women don't usually confront?

Vajrasuri: Somewhere, somewhere - I know that's a wild generalization ...

S: I would say from my own observations within men's communities and courses that men do encourage one another as well as confront one another. They certainly do confront but they encourage too.

Voice: I think it might be an idea to find out if men and women need to practise in a different way?

S: Well, I have raised this question a number of years back but I had to beat a hasty retreat. (Laughter) Because I found that the idea that women might have a different approach to the spiritual life and therefore might need a different kind of provision did not meet with any acceptance - at least it met with general disapproval. This was some years ago. The idea seemed to be that inasmuch as men and women are both individuals, well, they should be able to follow the same practices and do the same things in order to develop. The idea that men and women require a different sort of approach was not looked upon with favour, so I just sort of dropped it. I still sometimes wonder about this.

Rosie Ong: It's quite apparent when it comes to work, isn't it? (S: Is it?) Men and women tend to work in different ways.

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Rosie O: And when you put them together sometimes it's very difficult.

S: Yes, I must say I have noticed this and I think other people begin to notice it too. I think the way that men work is much more, as it were, competitive. They spur each other on by competing. So that can be positive and it can be negative. I think women, as far as I have observed, tend to co-operate more, yes? and I think men seem to prefer a hierarchical structure of working, women not. But that means that if you have a hierarchical structure, you can organize bigger scale, larger scale enterprises. But if you insist on doing everything co-operatively as women seem to prefer doing, it rather limits the scale of your operations. But yes, one could say that attitudes to work differ, but maybe you may not agree with that, or think it was cultural conditioning.

Marion: Well, men and women are conditioned differently so you'd think it would be right that they need different cultures to get them to the same point.

S: Even assuming it's conditioning and not innate, well, one would still need a different type of

counter-conditioning.

Rosie Ong: Do you have any ideas about what these different approaches might be?

S: Well, traditionally there is some idea about this. The traditional view is that women are devotional in their approach and men are more intellectual. They like to understand and discuss with arguments, whereas women like to be devoted and to serve. If in the modern West, you sort of suggest that, many women just don't like that! They won't accept that serving is a more natural approach for them. They'll say well, that's another example of cultural conditioning. They don't want anything to do with it. They want to get away from it. They think it demeans women to regard serving as their more natural approach. But that's what they believe in the East. So maybe one comes up against, maybe another kind of cultural conditioning. You see what I mean? This cultural conditioning in favour of complete uniformity.

Rosie Ong: Do you want a personal attendant, Bhante? (Laughter)

S: I'd love one! (Laughter)

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Rosie Ong: A female one? (Laughter) (Dhammadinna: With short hair?)

S: If I got my coffee at 11 and my tea at 4 O'clock I wouldn't care who it was - even if it was an hermaphrodite! (Loud Laughter) I've even thought that as I get older I might prefer to live in a women's community. (Voices: Yes, Right, I'm taking that down!) I've told some of the men in the men's' community - you know, when the service hasn't been quite what it should be, that maybe when I'm older and can't look after myself so much, I might go and stay in a women's community and be properly looked after. (Voices: You'd be very welcome! Yes!)

Although the men aren't too bad. There was quite an improvement down in Sukhavati last time I was there, I must say this. But I think probably as one gets older and as communities - whether men's or women's - become more definitely spiritual communities, so far as I'm concerned, it matters less and less whether I stay in one or the other. It's largely a matter of convenience. Anyway, that's a little aside.

Dhammadinna: Bhante, can I ask you something about this on a slightly different tack that came up in a study group at Sukhavati which we have heard little bits about, which we haven't heard the tapes - I think you said something about - I'll probably be misquoting you that women have a tendency to be more sensuous. Do you remember the discussion? (S: Yes) It was connected with the Kama-loka, Rupa-loka, Arupa-loka and therefore, might find it more difficult to get into dhyanic states. Can you say more about the discussion?

S: I was expounding, so to speak, the traditional view. The traditional view is that in the life of women - certainly as lived right up until modern times, biological processes loom more large, in as much as she was pregnant every year - usually - had a succession of children. One might also go further than that - there are various other things to be taken into consideration - loom large in the life of women which just don't take place in the life of men. So, in that sense one might say that women were more preoccupied with the physical level of existence. Or rather put it this way: they were reminded of it more frequently. Do you see what I mean? (Dhammadinna: Yes!) In a way that men are not. They forget all about it, apart from the pure sexual urge itself. But women are reminded in so many other ways. So one can regard this possibly, as a difficulty. Some women might [73] regard it as an advantage. But one could regard it as a disadvantage without thereby passing any sort of value judgement.

Kay: I think this might be what draws women back, because once a month there might be a few

days or a week, when they are premenstrual and they have to rest or ...

S: Or even might not be in a very positive mental state, - nothing holds you back permanently, but at least for a few days you may have to pause, before sort of forging ahead.

Annie Murphy: I think these surveys that are going on now have discovered in fact that more than half the percentage of the world's food is actually produced by women when it comes down to it. I mean the actual growing and planting, in fact.

S: Well, in India you see women working in the fields, even working on the roads. A lot of rough work is done by women. Even women who are very obviously pregnant, you know, which doesn't seem right from a health point of view.

Dhammadinna: So is that sort of preoccupation with the biological the physical level and that cyclical energy, make it more difficult for you to - because in the higher stages of meditation you are not aware of your physical body - that's why - if you go up into the third dhyana, you leave that behind.

S: Well, I would say that the further on in the spiritual life you get once you have got further, the less these differences matter to you. I have heard and here I speak only from hearsay - I have heard that in the case of women who lead an intense spiritual life and who are as it were, having frequent experience of dhyanic states, menstruation ceases. (Voices: Ahhh! Laughter) because there are references in the biographies of various spiritual women, yoginis and so on, - this is one of the things which is said or which some of them have said. As distinct from actually reaching the menopause, even in the case of young women, menstruation is suspended if they do in fact get quite intensively into the spiritual life. You haven't heard anything about this?

Dhammadinna: I've often wondered about that. It's a big incentive!

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S: It can be useful, because some years ago, - I won't mention any names, - but there was one particular woman Order member who afterwards resigned and I know, only because it was so obvious, that within every month she suffered so much. Her face was just creased in pain. She just couldn't do anything. There was no question of her taking a class or leading a puja. She just had to lie down and she was incapacitated usually for at least five days, often for a week. And that was very sad to see. So obviously this isn't the case with all women but it is the case with some and it is at least a minor handicap, from a purely spiritual point of view. Not that it permanently holds one back and not that it can't be transcended.

Dhammadinna: But it does in a sense prevent you from - I know when I was on a solitary retreat - I can get - lots of meditation - I can get my energy level quite stable, but you know, as the cycle comes around there is a drop in energy and less desire to meditate.

S: In the case of men, then, if they are sort of building up their energy month after month. It goes on - other factors being equal - and that is also to be emphasized - without a break, it can go on building up and up and up. But presumably that doesn't tend to happen with women, or does it?

Dhammadinna: I think it depends on you and how healthy and how much you suffer from cramps ...

S: It can be just a sort of wrinkle, as it were, no more.

Dhammadinna: But it might be quite a dip.

Voice: I don't feel it's a drop in energy. I feel it's a different channelling of energy - (S: Well, biologically it is, yes) which can be just as creative in the same way as ...

S: Yes, but supposing at that moment you are just wanting to get more and more into meditation then, it might make a difference then.

Megha: I find actually, easier to sit, that's what I want to do is just to sit. And it's not - just checking up on it - and it's not necessarily - it's more kind of a settling down. I can sit, I can sit for long periods, but it's not kind of pushing on; it's almost like you're into kind of a cosy state. (S: A Bardo state.)

Annie Murphy: You can enjoy music, beautiful music and that sort of thing and being out in the open, in the country.

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S: Closer to nature, Mother Nature (Laughter) It's clear, yes, it can be a very positive state. Presumably in a healthy woman, it is a positive state, but it's not a state of galvanizing of energy in a particular direction. (Voices: No.) So all right, supposing it is so. So what is the best long-term policy, for a woman who wants to develop spiritually and mobilize her energies, as it were, over that longer period? What would be, as it were, the more conducive way of life? Or the best things for her to do? Or the best attitudes for her to adopt?

Dhammadinna: I think all you can do is be aware of that cycle, your own cycle and the way it affects you and work with it rather than against it.

S: Yes. Certainly not trying to force yourself to do things.

Dhammadinna: Yeah. I don't think it's a matter of different activities, necessarily, except you do have to make the space sometimes to not force yourself and then get wiped out, if that's what happens to you.

S: But presumably, in the case of the older woman who is past the menopause, this would not apply. She would be more as it were, like a man. Do you think so, in this sort of respect?

Vajrasuri: Don't know yet! (Laughter)

S: Well I'm not suggesting that any of you know, from personal experience (Laughter) but maybe you've heard other women talking, or know other women who are in the older age group.

Dhammadinna: We haven't got much experience of that yet, in the Movement. I know older women are quite often quite vigorous and energetic, but that's the mundane level. We don't have the spectrum ...

S: So this is why somebody mentioned possibly having a Tuscany for the women - but I wondered whether, having the same kind of thing as one has with the men, would necessarily work in the same way. Because in the case of the men there was a definite steady build-up of energy so to speak over the whole ... (Aeroplane noise drowns out words) ...

Voice: Let's try it (inaudible).

[76]

Annie Murphy: Yes. I wonder you see if the, whatever it is that occurs, would it actually mean a total loss of momentum, Bhante?

Voice: Yes, if one accepted it positively like you had to, not a dropping back in a sense but a method of going on again.

Rosie Ong: So the graph would go more like that?

S: Hmm. Yes, right. The overall effect would be cumulative.

Dhammadinna: If you get a lot of women on retreat together, all their periods start to come together at the same time, so you tend to get everybody ... (Laughter)

S: Even the Order Members?

Rosie Anderson: Oh, yes, it happens in communities as well, doesn't it?

Dhammadinna: So that's harder in a situation to have some people keeping the momentum going, because everybody tends to adjust to each other.

S: Well, in the case of the men again other factors being equal, they tend to all keep together.

Marion: I don't think there is actually that great a difference when you really average it out.

S: But, anyway, the discussion arose out of Rosie's original question as to why, you know, fewer women reach the point of Going for Refuge than men and the discussion has been an attempt to find an explanation for that. I have given my own sort of personal explanation, that's all. The fact is if one would like to see more women as it were, maybe one should say - making it more quickly - one doesn't want to push anybody in an unhelpful sort of way - but sometimes one does just wonder, you know, why more women don't seem to be reaching that point. So one of the things one wonders obviously is maybe the activities and that sort of thing, lean more towards the needs of men and maybe women need a different emphasis. One just wonder this, without having anything very definite to go by.

[77]

Rosie A: Bhante, when you were talking on the study group, which we have heard second hand reports about, you mentioned that women might find it more difficult to experience the dhyanas?

S: No, I didn't say that. Experience doesn't support that in fact. I don't within my own experience with both women and men, find any reason to believe that women have more difficulty experiencing dhyanic states. My own experience and contact with women does not suggest that. In fact, it does seem, one might hazard a generalization here that women partly on account of their lesser outwardgoingness and maybe their lesser tendency to distraction than men, sometimes get more steadily into meditation, or - I won't say find it easier but just get into it or they are more likely to get into it than men.

Men I see, are more easily distracted than women, but that's one of the disadvantages of being a man. I see this in men community members. They're very easily distracted in the sense of wanting to go out and do things and so on; more so, apparently than women. So, to the extent that they are less likely to be distracted in that way, women tend to get on with their meditation more. Do you see? So I certainly wouldn't say that women have more difficulty than men in getting into dhyana states. No, that doesn't agree with my experience.

Paula: One thing that does seem to happen when you have children is, if you are trying to meditate in the same location as them, you can put this time aside - if you have got time to actually experience dhyana states - there is a part of you that is listening. You can't seem to shut that off.

S: Do you think that does make a difference if you've got children?

Dhammadinna: If dhyana is a state of going away, in a sense ...

S: And if you're a mother, you feel you can't really ever completely go away, and you've got to be on the alert to the needs of the child.

Voice: There is quite a difference meditating at home or on retreat. Meditating on a retreat when the children aren't there.

S: Because you know that someone else is looking after them. You are, as it were, off duty. You can get on with something else. [78] Perhaps in that case one would hazard a guess, especially in the case of women who do have children, they need more opportunities of getting away, just because the children are more with them. It's easier for the father to get away, so maybe one of the helpful things that can be done, would be to see that women, especially women with children, do have more opportunities of getting away on retreat, because for them a retreat is more of a change.

Daphne: Your attitude when you are on retreat is more one of appreciation.

S: ... much as you love your children, no doubt it can sometimes be a relief to be away from them for a few days. Anyway, this is one of the points that one needs to bear in mind, especially if one thinks in terms of women preparing for ordination.

Jenny: (?) I think it goes into other areas too. Recently, I've started working full-time and that is the first time I've worked full-time in about 14 years. It was really good to get into that flow and galvanize energies into one direction. That's another thing you can't do to the same extent with children. You've got to remain available to change nappies and ...

S: But anyway, obviously this doesn't apply to women who don't have children, - there's a different case, isn't there? But anyway, have we come to any definite conclusions from ...?

Rosie Ong: Yes, I do experience that men make that jump more easily than women and I think women can develop that kind of moving of energies in that kind of way, as they get more masculine.

S: I tend to think of men as being more like the hare, and women as more like the tortoise. Do you see what I mean? But don't forget that the tortoise overcomes ... (Laughter) It's sometimes dangerous to be a hare. I think there is some truth in that.

Rosie Anderson: I sometimes get the feeling - I don't know how prejudiced this is? - women mobilize every part of them and all of them move. It's quite a slow process but gradually the whole person changes. Whereas with the men, quite often part of them shoots ahead - sometimes you find men have got things ...

[79]

S: I think this is true... Yes, there is a reaction ... that the hare runs forward and then doubles back, does this two or three times, whereas the old tortoise just ... (Laughter) ... There are some men who are tortoises. I do look with favour on the tortoises. They do get there in the end. But it could be something like that.

A tortoise can become more hare-like and a hare can become more tortoise-like. Maybe in the case of women maybe just a longer time.

Dhammadinna: I think sometimes some women can mobilize their energy in a sort of forced way - a pseudo-way.

S: Yes, I've seen ... I am personally very reluctant to push women too much for that reason.

Dhammadinna: Because it's not the same as a guy going that, because I think it damages a woman emotionally, for some reason.

S: I really feel I can push a lot of the men. I don't feel that way about the women. I feel almost as if it would be cruel to push the women, in the way I sometimes push the men. But any woman who really feels that she needs pushing and can stand it, well, she's only got to tell me and I'll push her too. (Laughter) But anyway, at her own risk. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: The Tigers Cave.

S: No, it's not quite 'Tiger's Cave'. (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: Do you feel you'd like to answer the last question: how does it come about a male birth or a female birth?

S: Well, the traditional view is quite clear. I give it just as the traditional view, that sex is karmically determined. It's not due to accident, so if you are, as it were, more preoccupied with existence in the Kamaloka and with sense experience, you are more likely to be born as a woman. This is the traditional view. Some would regard that as just prejudice and so on, but it is an explanation.

Dhammadinna: So, if - going back to the beginning of this - if you were born indeterminate, that's also karmically?

[80]

S: I don't remember that being explicitly stated, but I assume that would follow, yes - I am not sure what kind of Karma that would be.

Dhammadinna: It would be important somehow to clarify in the present life to stop it ...

S: But I do hope even, we'll have perhaps quite a large number of women also just get to that point all at once; that may well make a big difference. But you know, one can't push too much. One can only advise, exalt, encourage them to do so. I sometimes do feel that if the women Order members gave more of a push to the women mitras they might move more quickly, but when I try to push the women Order members a bit more, I feel, well, they are not really able to be pushed, not in the way I push the men, anyway. So I just have to desist. I just sort of accept the situation. I don't want to see them breaking down or anything like that. I think it could happen in some cases if I did push as I push some of the men Order members. I am quite prepared to recognize that there may be exceptions. If there are, come forward and ask to be pushed - Upasikas or mitras. But anyway, is the discussion practically helpful or does it leave things pretty much where they were?

Rosie Anderson: I think it's helpful actually, - it's clarified quite a lot of things.

S: OK. Let's carry on. We're getting on slowly, but never mind. "As a human being means to have the same fate and fortune as other men and to have either the male or female organs." At least your position is pretty clear cut; you know exactly where you stand; you know exactly what point to go forward from.

"To be born in the Central Country implies a land where we can rely on virtuous people" - Central Country of Andhra Pradesh, originally refers to north eastern India where the Buddha originally taught, but it came to mean any country where there was an ethical and spiritual tradition. Do you see what I mean?

Tibet came to be regarded subsequently as a middle country. So to be born in the Central Country, implies a land where we can rely on virtuous people? This word 'rely' is a bit ambiguous. If the country is, say, inhabited by virtuous people, people observing the precepts, people whose behaviour is skilful rather than unskilful, well, that will influence you. It won't be that you are exactly [81] relying upon it, but it will provide you with a very positive support. You will grow up, sort of naturally skilful in your behaviour, naturally ethical.

And then "'to possess all senses' is not to be an idiot or a mute, and to have the good fortune to be able to realize the good and wholesome." An idiot - one who is mentally defective; or a mute - one who can't speak. Because that would mean you wouldn't be able to communicate with other people. It would inhibit your learning of the Dharma. "And to have the good fortune to be able to realize the good and wholesome". What does it mean by 'being able to realize the good and wholesome'?

Debbie: Being able to develop.

S: Yes, but in what capacity would that consist as distinct from being just a human being?

Dhammadinna: You'd have to be able to discriminate between skilful and unskilful.

S: You'd also have to have the energy - maybe it suggests even health that you weren't weak.

Marion: Would it mean receptivity as well?

S: Possibly, yes. Willing at least to be open to the possibility of leading a spiritual, ethical, skilful life. Then it says, top of page 16 - "'To have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life' is to believe that the Disciplinary Code (Vinaya) of the Noble Doctrine proclaimed by The Teacher (Buddha) is the foundation of all positive qualities." What does one understand by 'Vinaya', here, do you think?

Vajrapushpa: Would it be the ethical basis?

S: The ethical basis. The word 'Vinaya' is usually explained as 'Vinayati': to lead away from evil; to lead away from unskilful mental states; that discipline, that way of life which leads you away from unskilful mental states. But this raises the whole question of discipline, doesn't it? Do you see what I mean? The value of discipline. Is discipline helpful? What is discipline, anyway?

[82]

Rosie Ong: More like a training, isn't it?

S: Like a training, right. But in what does the training consist?

Marion: Following the precepts.

S: Following the precepts.

Debbie: Directing one's energy.

S: Directing one's energies. It's not just directing one's energies, it's directing one's energies with

the help of a certain kind of 'help', let us say. It's not just sort of seeing the need to direct your energies and just doing it. It's more like directing your energies with the help of a sort of regular disciplined systematic way of life.

Vajrasuri: A framework.

S: A framework, yes. Talking about this sort of thing a little while ago, for instance, in a community, - suppose you live in a community, a spiritual community. Well, it's helpful to have a sort of framework. Do you see what I mean? You all meditate together in the morning at such and such a time; that meals are at such and such a time; every week you have a house-meeting; every week you have a study. This is your framework, this is your sort of discipline. Do you see what I mean? You undertake to adhere to this framework even when you're not actually quite feeling like it, because that framework, that discipline helps you to acquire skilful habits, helps to keep you in an overall skilful state. You don't rely on your minute by minute inspiration, as it were. That might be very weak, so you rely in a sensible sort of way of that constructed framework. Well, that's why you have a spiritual community at all. At least that's one of the reasons why you have it. Do you see what I mean? So this is discipline.

Rosie A: It gives you a sort of foundation.

S: Yes. Well, it is in fact called a 'foundation', isn't it? To have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life. It's the opposite of sloppiness; it's the opposite of the happy-go-lucky, careless, heedless, unmindful sort of attitude: "Well, it doesn't matter when I meditate. I can meditate any time". Do you see what I mean? So that really means you don't meditate at all. (Laughter)

So I think discipline in this sense, is an important part of the spiritual life. It's called the 'foundation' here. You build [83] upon that. It's not just a question apparently of personal ethics; it's not just a question of observing the precepts. It's a question of a framework for your whole life; your way of life. It means adopting a particular kind of lifestyle or modifying your lifestyle in a particular way, so that you are being influenced and affected in a particular way, all of the time, as for instance, by your regular daily meditation, your regular daily meals, your regular weekly study and so on. This suggests regularity, even uniformity; suggests pattern. Do you see what I mean? Not that you need be like this necessarily all the time. You might live like that much of the time, all right, but maybe every year you might have a week or two off and you live in a, so to speak, not exactly undisciplined way, but a completely unprogrammed way. Maybe that is useful, just for a change, so you don't become rigid. But broadly speaking, people who are just beginning to develop spiritually - they need discipline in this sort of sense. Discipline is a rather nasty word for some people these days. So we have to be careful how we use it. But do you see what we're getting at? What the word 'Vinaya' really means? Who doesn't like the word 'discipline'?

Annie Fowler: I don't.

S: You don't. What does the word 'discipline', convey to you?

Annie F: Discipline conveys somebody with power over me - making me do something I don't want to do.

S: Well, clearly that isn't the case in the spiritual community because you've joined it of your own free-will. There you are with your sisters. You discuss among yourselves. This is the pattern we want to create.

Annie F: But I think you have to be careful to remember that that is what you are doing and not project authority on to other people.

S: Yes, it isn't that sort of strict Sanghadevi. (Laughter) It's what you yourself have agreed to.

Annie F: But you can feel like that sometimes. I mean, I've felt like that.

S: Well, you have to ask yourself is this just a sort of subjective feeling? Am I just projecting or is it actually like that?

Jenny: On a mundane level, I think that's very helpful in the family life too.

S: Oh yes. Well, you'll never get through the day's work unless you have some sort of system, some sort of discipline ...

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Jenny: For the children as well.

S: For the children as well, yes. I think it does help to give them a sort of structure with definite times for getting up and going to bed and maybe, except on special occasions, and make definite plans for meals, does help, I think, unless it's an exceptionally positive, happy, creative family. Sometimes you see this. You see some families - the mother doesn't care when she gives the kids their meals they do in the kitchen and help themselves when they feel like it. She doesn't bother. But it seems to work with some families, but I think not with many.

Voice: It's a bit of a modern attitude, I think, to letting the children do what they want, but it doesn't work - it's chaos if they haven't got a structure.

S: Yes, they may not be very happy.

Voice: They appreciate it.

S: ... reasonable discipline.

Voice: Sometimes they make their own structures too.

S: Well, yes. Their games represent a structure they create.

Dhammadinna: I think the same thing applies in a community. Quite often people will want to live quite freely together. I think you can do that with a very small number, because you can co-operate on how you divide certain tasks you do. But once you are over about four or five, you've got to have agreed structures and principles.

S: Yes, and you've got to be responsible otherwise if someone is irresponsible, well, someone else has either got to do their share of the work for them or remind them that they've not done their share and then when they are reminded they feel they're being told what to do or someone is being heavy with them, etc. etc. But it's simply that they have been irresponsible. I think [we] must not allow people to get away with this sort of thing, saying that others are being heavy and dictatorial when it's simply they who are being irresponsible.

Dhammadinna: I know when Megha and I both lived together in a community and Megha in that particular community had trouble in this sort of area because we lived with very young people and any kind of structure was an imposition and didn't want to do this

S: Well, put it this way: People who want to have structures [85] shouldn't live with people who don't want to have structures and live with people who want to have structures and all the people who don't want to have structures, live together, the people who don't want to live with

structures, live together ... (Laughter) ... They'll soon learn! (Laughter)

Megha: What's happening now is the three people live together in a community and they have created their own structure. It's far more organized than either Dhammadinna or I would have ever put up with.

S: I read a beautiful story in a newspaper of a mother and father - people getting old and they got really fed up with their teenage son and daughter. So what did they do, they moved out. (Laughter) Yes, they started a new life so they got new jobs and a new home and left the kids there. They gave them an allowance; 'There you are son and daughter, the house is yours'. They gave it over to them and they gave them money every week, but they didn't get on very well without their parents. (Laughter) The budget was fine to start with, the first few weeks; their pals round; no distinction of day or night; rock music all the time. You know, eating when they felt like it, but the place started to get a bit dirty and a bit slummy. Then they found sometimes there wasn't any food and they forgot to buy and the shops were closed. They didn't have any clean clothes, whereas formerly all the clean clothes were simply put on their beds, ready for them. Clothes weren't clean and windows were dirty and money was owing. They got into debt despite their allowance. Mum and dad came and bailed them out, paid all their debts, but it didn't work very well. They rather regretted their parents had left home. (Laughter) They seemed excellent parents yet they seemed to have brought their children up too indulgently without a sense of responsibility. Anyway, let's have tea ...

(End of Tape 13)

[86]

Annie Fowler: I find it very draining to live in a situation which is dirty. You almost want to put up barriers against it so that you don't see it. I mean it's just such a waste of energy. (S: Right)

Marion: Isn't Bhante saying that it's an ideal for women ...?

S: To some extent, yes. I'm not suggesting that the ideal housewife is an ideal for all women, but I think that if you do find yourself a wife and a mother, well, surely it's more satisfying for you as well as for others if you really put your heart into it and do it in the best possible way that you can; as creatively as you can and not think that it's a, you know, second best to having a career - I mean that a career is where it's really at for women. If you think in that sort of way, well, maybe you should just have a career. But if you're a wife and mother, well you can make that your career.

Paula: I think it's when the whole thing becomes rigid; when you go on, sort of and see women whose children have left home and they still keep this 'shrine' - the home.

S: Yes. But that's a quite different thing, you know, maintaining the nest when the birds have grown up and flown away. Well, what's the point of the nest? You might as well fly away yourself! Or build a smaller nest.

You shouldn't have to feel apologetic about anything you're doing in which you really believe ... regardless of what other people say.

Vajrasuri: That's a hard one often, because you're often right against the peer group.

S: I mean, for instance, I had a session with some of the men mitras down in Sukhavati; I didn't know all of them so they were introducing themselves and one of them introduced himself by saying he was married and had a family with an apologetic laugh. You see what I mean? So I took this up and I said; "Well, it's not his fault; it's the responses of other people. They've given

him the impression that being married was something a bit of a joke - something to be ashamed of and that wasn't really right. That wasn't a positive attitude." So I think we have to watch that.

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Vajrasuri: That was quite prevalent in the movement four years ago. I don't think it's so much now.

S: Then there again, it goes back to what we were saying about that you should be able to follow your own chosen life-style without feeling any need to persuade people to follow it too to give you that additional sense of security. But that can come about only if you really are convinced that notwithstanding your different lifestyle, you are all essentially on the same spiritual path - you have the same spiritual goal. (Pause) Let's go on

Then it says: "'To have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life' is to believe that the Disciplinary Code (Vinaya) of the Noble Doctrine proclaimed by the Teacher (Buddha) is the foundation of all positive qualities." Maybe we should go into that a little bit more. "Discipline being the foundation of all positive qualities." In what way is discipline, in the sense in which we've discussed it, the foundation of all positive qualities? The foundation?

Megha: Because it leads to more skilful states of mind - the Dhyana states and so on.

S: But it seems as though discipline is an integral part of the spiritual life - it's even the foundation.

Dhammadinna: In a way, discipline, in the sort of way we've been talking about it, is a framework, is a clarifying factor in your life, a simplifying factor.

S: A point of reference; a criterion; a standard.

Dhammadinna: So if you can create the base level that's like that, then you can move on, but if you're always trying to argue out, say in the community, or trying to argue out certain things that - well, then you could come to an agreement about - not a fixed, static code of rules but (S: Yes, right) ...

S: Well, you can devise a code from time to time if circumstances change.

Dhammadinna: Yes, but if you're always arguing about things like that, then you never actually move on - your energy, communication stays on a certain level. It's not ... 'till it's all sorted out. That's different from revising something - you see how it goes and then you revise it from a positive standpoint and then maybe you change something, that's ongoing, but ...

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S: Yes, right. I think sometimes what happens is that all the people in the community agree, for instance, that they're going to have a seven o'clock meditation every morning. They all agree to that. But then maybe someone doesn't turn up for a whole week and then others ask him "Well, why weren't you there?" and he says; "Oh, I don't think that that's necessary that we all have to sit at the same time every day." You see what I mean? He's agreed to that - he was one of those who agreed to that but when challenged for not adhering to that he shifts his ground, as it were.

But I think this is the sort of thing one should just not do in a community, when you all agreed, you know, to that common framework. You must all honour that framework. And if you fail to honour it, you mustn't change your ground, you know, argue that a framework of that sort isn't necessary, having yourself already agreed to it.

Marion: It means communities can't really be democratic, doesn't it? Because it always means that somebody hasn't actually agreed with it, which means it's the majority that's agreed which ...

S: Well, I think one has to decide you know, whether there is a consensus or whether there's a majority. Usually I think consensus is preferable, but then I think if you've got, you know, a community where there are Order members and mitras and others, I think the community with the Order members should have the deciding voice, on the whole, because by very definition they are more experienced and more aware of the spiritual factors involved. That's one of the reasons why you as a mitra, as a friend, have wanted to join a spiritual community with Order members in it.

So in a sense in a spiritual community there isn't and shouldn't be any democracy, because this suggests that everybody's voice and everybody's vote is of equal value, which is in fact not the case.

So as Blake said - 'one rule for the Lion and the Ox is tyranny'. so I think one must be quite clear about this with regard to spiritual communities that every member of the spiritual community doesn't have an equal voice. That other factors being equal, Order members have, as it were, more say. This should be positively accepted or accepted in a positive spirit. This is not to say that you can't discuss things with Order members or even argue with them or even disagree . But when it comes to the point, well, they do have the deciding voice. And in a way, that is what you want.

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Annie F: Well, what do you think if the Order member isn't living up to your expectations?

S: Well, you may genuinely think that - well, you're free to say that. But you must be quite careful. I think one must always be very careful not to say to anybody that they're not all that they're supposed to be. You can disagree with them in a particular matter, but to generalize etc. from that and say, "Oh, you're not a very good Order member. I don't think you're a sincere Order member or mitra" as the case may be. I think this is highly undesirable.

Annie F: But you can actually say to them, why. Why if you did think that, really you should tell them that you're thinking it ... if you really felt that.

S: I suppose you could or you can - but I think that's the sort of thing one should say with extreme caution or know, mindfully, as it were, because how can the other person come back and say: "No, I am committed, I am a good Order member". They can't! The only way in which they convince you is by their behaviour. Apparently you haven't been convinced by that, so if you say, "Well, I don't think you're much of an Order member", there's nothing in fact they can say in reply, except "Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way". Though one has to be very careful not to put the discussion on that sort of personal basis. You may question the wisdom of someone's individual actions but I think you have to be very careful not to impugn them as a person totally.

Voice: What would be the smallest denominator of people to form a spiritual community?

S: Oh dear! That's quite a question. I mean, what is a community? Two people can live together quite happily and maybe creatively, but is it a community? Or three or four. Traditionally, I think four is the absolute minimum. Five is really the minimum but four the absolute minimum. If there's only two, well, I suppose the danger is it could become a couple, whether it's a man and a woman or two men or two women - they would become a bit couple-like, With three I think there's a danger that two would be more friendly and leave the other in isolation. If there's four, there's a danger that it will split up into two pairs. I think five probably is the real minimum, - you see what I mean? When there's five, you're sort of forced to try to relate to all the others on

pretty equal terms. [90] If it goes up, say, to twenty, I think that may be very difficult. I think that's what determines the optimum. The optimum being the largest number of people with whom you can keep up a reasonably good, individual personal contact. You can't do it with a hundred.

So if you do have these bigger units, they have to be broken down into sub-units, eh? As, for instance, in the case of the big monastic colleges in Lhasa, formerly. They contained thousands of monks, but they were all broken down into colleges and the colleges were broken down into messes. So you ended up with a smaller sub-group of ten or twelve people with whom you had your intimate daily or day-to-day contacts. You see what I mean? Though for certain purposes or on certain occasions you know, you did things with all the other members of your college or all the other members of the other - the whole monastery.

So five? six? seven? eight? up to ten or twelve? Maybe even more, huh? But at least five. Maybe one shouldn't go over ten or twelve without serious thought or without a special effort to keep the whole thing very much together.

Voice: How many people do you have here?

S: At Padmaloka? At present there are seventeen members of the community and we usually have two, three, four guests. It seems to work. It's worked so far. It does of course help that it's in the country. And people have been keeping up the morning meditation pretty well. And they do have regular house meetings; they have regular study; they sometimes have two, well, they usually have two even three community study groups a week in addition to which there is the Order-meeting every Sunday evening for those members of the community who are Order members.

Different groups of people do things together. It is very rarely that one person or even two people, go to the cinema together. There's more likely to be five or six going together. One car-load or one vehicle load. And people are nearly always in for meals - well lunch. Maybe not if somebody's working outside, but it's very rarely that everybody's not there for supper together. Unless they're got say, a Karate class immediately afterwards or something like that. So there is a lot of regular contact.

And there is a cooking rota - there is a different cook every day, and there are two different people every day to do the washing-up so it's all most (efficient). It certainly doesn't feel over-organized. I'm sure no body feels over-organized or over-regimented.

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People are on the whole quite considerate with regard to one another. For instance several members of the community train together. They go for runs together, go swimming together or canoeing together. They do a lot of things together. (Laughter) They work too. (Laughter)

They have to support themselves in one way or another. In fact they're all very busy. Most of them are very busy. Some working full-time in the garden, others in the candle-factory. Two or three others in the building business they're trying to get together. Subhuti and Vessantara dealing with my work, correspondence, contact from centres. Subhuti attends - prepares for chairman's meetings and similar things. He's very very busy. Kovida is the only one at the moment who's not doing very much and that's because he recently resigned as secretary and treasurer of the FWBO so he's having a bit of a break, doing a bit of writing.

Anyway, back to the text: "To have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life' is to believe that the Disciplinary Code (Vinaya) of the Noble Doctrine proclaimed by The Teacher (Buddha) is the foundation of all positive qualities." This really does stress the importance of discipline, the

regulated life, a regular life.

Anyway, to go on: "'Not to revert to inexpiable evil deeds' means not to commit heinous crimes in this life". What are these heinous deeds? According to the note:

"The term 'reverting to inexpiable evil deeds' is usually applied to those who having been born in families who live by hunting, prostitution, and other forms of gaining a livelihood, from childhood on commit inexpiable evil deeds. But it really includes all actions contrary to the Dharma, whether done by body, speech or mind.

I'm not sure if this is in accordance with the Indian Buddhist tradition at least. Heinous crimes, - I'm not sure what the technical term is - is usually quite serious things like matricide, patricide, wounding a Buddha, killing an Arhant, and creating schism in the Sangha. The heinous crimes or sins are usually regarded as these. So, if one - and these are said to be inexpiable - 'inexpiable' is a pretty strong word, but it means actions which once performed will certainly hold you back in a very serious manner and which are not easy to counter-balance with skilful actions.

I mean, hunting is regarded - if you're born in a family of hunters, that is to say, you're hunting all the time - that is your livelihood, clearly this is very very highly unskilful, because you're repeatedly performing unskilful actions, repeatedly taking life. But whether that could be referred to as 'inexpiable evil deeds', or as 'heinous crimes', I'm not so sure. Be more like habitual unskilful karma. but the more truly heinous offences are those which I [92] mentioned, and that is a list which appeared frequently in Buddhist texts. You can understand why those things are regarded as serious can't you? In the case of matricide and patricide, that's worse than ordinary murder just because you have to do violence to your natural feelings.

And then again if you wound the Buddha or kill an Arhant, this suggests a really antagonistic attitude towards everything spiritual and that is surely a heinous offence. And as for creating schism in the Sangha, the spiritual community itself, well, again that is the absolute negation of spiritual life. (Long Pause)

All right then. So we've dealt with 'Right 'Juncture', in the sense of the five events which affect us directly. That is to say, " As a human being to be born in the central country and to possess all senses, - not to revert to inexpiable evil deeds and to have confidence in the foundation of spiritual life".

And then there are five events affecting us mediately. That is to say indirectly and now we go on to those. Would someone like to read that paragraph?

Linda: "The five events occurring through others and affecting us mediately are: 1. the appearance of a Buddha in this world, 2. the teaching of the Noble Doctrine; 3. the stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine; 4. the attuning to this stableness and 5. to have active compassion and love for the sake of others."

S: So, "the five events occurring through others and affecting us mediately are the appearance of a Buddha in this world". Well, this clearly affects us even though it is mediately, because the fact that the Buddha appears in this world means that the Path to Enlightenment is open The appearance of a Buddha in this world doesn't of course, necessarily mean during our own lifetimes but the appearance of a Buddha in the world, in the historical period, the aeon, as it were, within which we also live. (Pause)

And then "the teaching of the Noble Doctrine" - if the Buddha appears in the world but doesn't teach, that doesn't help us very much. If the Buddha is just, say, a Pratyekabuddha, that doesn't help us very much. So the teaching of the Noble Doctrine - this also affects us mediately. This

also constitutes a 'Right Juncture'.

"The stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine, and the attuning to this stableness" - there are long notes about the 'attuning', but they don't really help very much. So what does this mean? The Teaching - not only the teaching of the Noble Doctrine but 'the stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine'. What do you think this means? [93] Can you make anything of it?

Dhammadinna: Could it be that there's a consistency in the expression of the Dharma (S: Ah!) so that you've always got the Noble Eight-fold Path which is consistent.

S: It's not exactly expression, it's more like a stability in the subject matter. Dharma is here used apparently in a double sense - 'elements of existence' in the sense of 'Dharma' with a small 'd' as taught in the Noble Doctrine, Dharma with a big 'D', so to speak.

In the Noble Doctrine, the elements of existence are revealed as being of a certain nature. Do you see what I mean? The Buddha, for instance has taught the Truth of impermanence that the elements of existence are impermanent. And they remain impermanent. Do you see what I mean? Their impermanence is a stable factor in the Universe. So, in other words, the Truth revealed in the Buddha's teaching, as it were, - the basis of the Buddha's teaching hasn't changed since He taught it so that it's no longer applicable. If there had been a change in the very structure of existence so that mundane existence was no longer impermanent then the Buddha's teaching wouldn't apply - you couldn't practise it any more. Do you see what I mean? But there's a stability of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine. There hasn't been any change in the nature of existence as reflected, so to speak, in the Buddha's teaching. It remains stable, therefore it continues to be a basis for practice.

I mean, it is still true that the cause of suffering is craving - that hasn't changed. It is still true that in dependence upon vedana there arises tanha. That still holds true. There is a stability of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine. So this fact also is a 'Right Juncture' - makes it possible to practise.

It's rather like in science, the teaching of what is called the 'uniformity of nature'. Have you done this in studying logic? Anyone studied logic? Inductive logic? The 'uniformity of nature' for instance, if you perform an experiment in one part of the world or one part of the Universe, given the same conditions, you can repeat that experiment anywhere else in the Universe and obtain the same results. Or you can repeat it today, given the same conditions, you will get the same results as you got yesterday or the day before; because the same laws are in operation everywhere in the Universe and at all times. This is called the [94] Doctrine of the Uniformity of Nature. So it is something like that isn't it, uh?- in the case of the stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble-Doctrine.

The Noble Doctrine is based, in a way, on the uniformity of nature, maybe in a deeper sense. It is based on principles which are always true; which always hold good. So that the teaching is never out of date, never invalidated. This is why it is *akaliko*, timeless. It is based on unchanging features of existence.

Voice: Could it not be?

S: Well, if it was a real Teaching or real Dharma, no, it couldn't not be. But if it was, for instance, highly conditioned, even essentially conditioned by cultural factors existing in the Buddha's time, then yes, it would become out of date. Do you see what I mean?

Suppose it was based on what turned out to be an exploded scientific hypothesis. Well, for

instance, the case of Christianity. I mean, part of Christianity, originally, well many, many centuries until recently, for some people still, is the fact that God created this world, the Universe, in six days. So could that be, could one refer to that, as being part of the stableness of the elements of existence, taught in the Bible, huh? No. Whatever superstructure is raised on that basis, that is to say that God created the world is very shaky. Or maybe on the historical fact, so called, or alleged, of the Virgin Birth. Do you see what I mean, A lot of Christian doctrine and traditional teaching is based upon what we would regard as either exploded scientific hypothesis, or historical facts which cannot possibly be verified; which require an act of faith for their acceptance. But that everything conditioned is impermanent is something you can verify for yourself. So the Buddhist teaching is based on such facts. (Pause) So therefore, one of the 'events occurring through others and affecting us mediately is this stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine'. The basis of the Buddha's Teaching has not become, as it were, outmoded since He taught.

Then fourthly, 'the attuning to this stableness', - that is to say, the bringing of your life, the bringing of your practice into line with the very fundamental nature of existence itself. For instance, if you bring your life into line with the Law of Impermanence, it means you're not clinging on to anything, because you recognize that everything is impermanent. So you've brought your life into line with that Truth of Impermanence, into harmony [95] with it. You've attuned your life to an aspect of that stableness. Well, I think this is an aspect of the Buddha's Teaching which appealed to the Chinese, especially perhaps, to the Taoists that following the Dharma meant bringing your individual life into harmony with the great 'whole', with the laws of existence - not going against them, going along with them.

This word 'Tao' is very interesting in this connection. 'Tao' apparently originally meant a sort of way of going, a way of functioning, a way of going in accordance with nature, in accordance with the Universe. In other words the way of naturalness, the way of harmony. And in the end, just the Way, just the Tao. The following the Tao means just keeping yourself in harmony with nature, going along with nature, along with life, along with the Universe - not opposing it, not going against the flow. Tao suggested all this and the word Dharma was used very often by early translators as in the Sutra of 42 Sections, as the equivalent for Tao.

Dharma also has that meaning too - that it is the very nature of existence, the way things function, the way they are; and the Buddha makes that clear in His Teaching, in the Dharma as we call it. The spiritual life consists, from one point of view, of adjusting yourself to existence, recognizing the nature of existence and acting accordingly. You see that everything is impermanent. So what would be more foolish, what could be more foolish than just clinging on to impermanent things and trying to make them permanent. No wonder you suffer! But you go along with that, you act upon that fact of impermanence, that law of impermanence.

Marion: If the Dharma itself is not impermanent, how can it be that there are times when it isn't in operation or ... ?

S: Well, the Dharma is always in operation, as a spiritual principle. But it may not be always expressed in the form of a teaching. Do you see what I mean? The Dharma itself in the sense of the Law of the Universe, never falls into abeyance. I mean the Law of Gravitation is there - gravitation exists whether Newton survives or not.

In the same way, the Buddha says: This Dharma exists meaning not his formulated teaching but you know, the fundamental Law of the Universe which His Teaching makes clear - exists whether Buddhas, whether Tathagatas come or go. So there's never a period when the Dharma, the unformulated Dharma, doesn't exist, but there are periods when the formulated Dharma doesn't exist. [96] So we are fortunate - it's called a 'Right Juncture' - if we exist at the same time as the formulated Dharma. In other words, the nature of existence as formulated, as presented in

an actual teaching by an Enlightened being, who's understood the nature of existence.

Marion: So, it's different from - from you said earlier that the knowledge of German doesn't exist unless you're in contact with it but this is different?

S: Well, no. The knowledge doesn't exist unless you're in contact with it, but the object of the knowledge does exist even if you're not in contact with it; the Universe goes on functioning in its own way regardless of whether human beings understand it or not.

I mean, the comparison would be, people who go on speaking German even though there's no grammarian or philologist to explain to them in grammatical terms what it is they're speaking. So in a sense the Dharma is always there, unformulated.

Marion: I do get confused by (Interrupted)

Vajrasuri: (Makes it human), amazing, doesn't it - making this whole structure of communities ... (Inaudible)

Marion: I was getting confused - the teaching that nothing exists except in your observation of it. I mean everything's formed by mind or something ... (S: Yes)

S: Well, that is a fact of existence, too. (Laughter) You know that in the very act of observing phenomena, you modify them. This suggests that the distinction, well, the difference between subject and object is not really absolute - that in a way, there is, very strictly speaking, no such thing as an object completely independent of a subject, or a subject completely independent of all objects. There is a polarization within the field of experience, but not a complete separation. If the object was completely separated from subject, subject could never perceive object. So that law, that fact is included within the overall formulation which is the Dharma, the centre of the Buddha's teaching. It just makes it more complicated, unfortunately.

Voice: I remember reading that Tolstoy (once) became convinced that the objects only existed if he was looking at them. He was always looking behind him to catch a sight of the great big hole that was there.

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S: I have read somewhere that there is no logical refutation of that argument. That if you choose to believe that the Universe ceases to exist when you shut your eyes, and comes into existence when you open them, which is called solipsism in philosophy. I do believe, at least I've read that there is actually no logical argument to refute that position. (Laughter)

Sometimes it's an interesting exercise, you know, to sort of imagine that that is actually the way things are - that actually it's all in your own mind. Everything doesn't exist apart from that. That when you close your eyes, everything goes out of existence; when you open them again, you're like God, you bring everything into existence. (Laughter) I mean if there is a God, why shouldn't it be you. (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: I can remember playing that game as a child (V's: yes, yes) I think children are (Interrupted)

S: True, they are quite fascinated by these sort of ideas, aren't they?

Dhammadinna: I think children actually do that. I mean a little child who wants to hide from you will just hide its eyes and thinks that you can't see it when it can't see you.

S: Yes. Like the ostrich is supposed to do. (Pause) Anyway, lastly: "To have active compassion and love for the sake of others" - this is the fifth of these 'five events occurring through others and affecting us mediately'. This seems to me a little different from the others; that one should oneself have active compassion and love for the sake of others. How is it that this can be a Right Juncture for you? In what sense is it a Right Juncture for you? All the other junctures have represented things that were to your advantage?

Dhammadinna: It's supposed to be indirect as well, isn't it? (S: Hm, yes)

S: So how is this an indirect advantage to you, so to speak?

Marion: It's a good condition for your growth and development.

S: Yes, yes, one could say that. That helps, I suppose, you indirectly to be a Bodhisattva.

Rosie Ong: Because if there weren't any people, you couldn't have compassion for them.

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S: Yes, well, it doesn't say that - because then it should be 'other living beings', huh? But it doesn't actually say it. It says 'active compassion and love for the sake of others', huh?

But maybe it should be understood as the fact that there are other beings for whom you can have compassion and love. That other beings exist at the same time as you do, so that you can have compassion and love for them, - thereby develop yourself as well as help them to develop - that this is a Right Juncture. Maybe it should be understood in that way.

Rosie A: That could have reference to the Sangha as well, couldn't it? (S: Yes) That there are others for you to care for than you. A Sangha (S: yes, that's true).

Annie F: It's really a wonderful notion that you actually develop spiritually by helping other people to develop.

S: Yes. But of course, again there's a bit of a 'Catch-22', because you mustn't help others with the motive yourself just of developing spiritually, or just with that motive, huh? (Laughter)

You must devote yourself to others as it were, for their sake, not for yours; for it to benefit you. You must care for them for their own sake. You must forget yourself. It will only then benefit you. It is paradoxical but very true. Your love must be disinterested. You must really sort of have the other person in view and really devote yourself to them; really want to help them.

If you sort of just use them as a, you know, just giving them some help, just so indirectly you can help yourself, it doesn't really work. Can you see what I mean? You must really devote yourself to the other person for their sake; want to help them for their sake not for your sake, otherwise it won't help you to develop. Except maybe in a very superficial minor sort of way.

Annie F: It's quite a tricky one that!

S: Yes, it is.
(End of Side A)

S: Do you want to read these next two little paragraphs and then that first quotation:

Greta: "These two factors of unique occasion and right juncture meet in the precious human body.

S: Hmm. That is to say the 'precious human body' as distinct from just a human body in the ordinary literal sense.

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Greta: "The latter is called precious, because it is similar to the Wish-Fulfilling Gem, as difficult to obtain and Very useful. The 'Bodhisattvapitaka' says:

It is difficult to become a human being,
To receive the Noble Doctrine
And for a Buddha to appear."

S: Hmm. So the latter, that is to say 'the precious human body', is called precious because it is similar to the Wish-Fulfilling Gem. You know about this "Wish-Fulfilling Gem", huh? In Indian mythology there are various wish-fulfilling objects; there is a 'wish-fulfilling tree' and there a 'wish-fulfilling cow'. There's a 'wish-fulfilling gem' - that is to say, a gem which if you possess it will grant all your wishes - a bit like Aladdin's Lamp. You've only got to touch it or rub it and your wish will be granted. So what is the point, what is the sense of the precious human body being compared to the wish-fulfilling gem'?

Vajrapushpa: Because you can get what you really desire?

S: Yes. It's very 'difficult to obtain and very useful'. And then the verse says: "It is difficult to become a human being, to receive the Noble Doctrine and for a Buddha to appear". What about this "difficult to become a human being"?

Vajrasuri: Does that mean to become, you know, healthy, happy and human being within this lifetime?

S: Well, traditionally it usually means difficult to be born as a human being, because there are so many other forms of life. So statistically speaking, as it were, it is quite unlikely that any given being will be born or reborn as a human being. But perhaps one doesn't have necessarily to look at it like that. It is difficult to achieve the human status; it is difficult to be, genuinely, a human being - that is to say, human beings are rarer than we think. We shouldn't take it for granted that all the people who live in houses and wear clothes and drive to work in the morning are human beings. Do you see what I mean? I've touched on this point before from time to time in lectures also, I think. I mean what does it mean to be really human?

Perhaps some people like to think in terms of becoming genuinely human. I have said sometimes that maybe when talking to people outside the FWBO, it is a bit premature or maybe misleading to speak in terms of spiritual life. It's a question of becoming more human, more responsible, becoming more sensitive, becoming more [100] aware. Surely these are human qualities. Without these qualities you are not fully or truly human. So before you start calling upon people to become Buddha, for people to become Enlightened, perhaps you should think of calling upon them to become human. Do you see what I mean?

So, it's not so easy to become a human being; it's difficult to become a human being. You're not just a human being because you've got two arms and two legs, two eyes and a nose and hair on the top of your head. There's more to being a human being than that. Perhaps this point needs emphasizing - that people are not completely human being. There's a lot of the animal in most of them still. There's a lot of the dog and the cat and the wolf and the lion and the leopard, not to say the toad and the newt and the scorpion. Do you see what I mean, huh? We're still very amphibian. Half in the water half on land, half animal, half human so to speak. Do you see the point? Or do you think people really are human? Do you think it's being a bit cynical to regard them in this way?

Dhammadinna: You have to be careful of how you approach them. (S: Yes, yes) I think you could say 'become more human' rather than well you're not human (Laughter) because it is a scale ...

S: Yes, one should concentrate more on the development of one's human qualities. They're there but they're not fully developed. For instance, man is defined as a rational animal. Are all human beings consistently rational? Possibly they're not. (Laughter) But you can see what the definition means. You could even say that a human being is an aware animal, a self-conscious animal. To the extent that you're not aware, to the extent that you're not self-conscious, you're not fully and truly human.

I went into this a little in the lectures on "The Higher Evolution of Man" - I'm not sure - I haven't heard them for many years - but I think I go into that when I speak of that 'triangle of human development'. You heard those lecture? - You're familiar with the little diagram that comes with the lectures? Yes, good. The hypotenuse of human development, (Laughter) and you did work out what the x point was? (Laughter)

But I think this perhaps is a good approach to stress the development of human qualities - to be more human. Not human in the sense of human - 'all too human' - if you know what I mean? But sometimes we sort of believe what we suggest - that to be human well, to say that - that someone is human means that he has certain [101] weaknesses . 'Ah well, it's only human' - 'Ah well, that sort of weakness is natural'. We don't mean human in that sense - that's more 'all too human' ... sense.

Linda: On the other hand, if you say someone is 'inhuman', it's a real insult, isn't it? You mean they behave very very badly.

S: Yes, right. So it means that you do regard human - humanity as representing a definite standard of human behaviour and human value.

Voice: There's the word 'humane'.

S: Yes, indeed. The Chinese in the Confucian system have a very important virtue which is usually transliterated as Jen or Jan Jen with a circumflex accent - but it's a very difficult word to translate apparently. It's very often translated as human-heartedness. It's the quality of being really human. This is regarded as a great virtue in the Confucian system.

Vajrasuri: That has the quality of metta, or practising metta.

S: Yes, yes, indeed. One could say that if you haven't got a well developed metta, you're not really human. Also in Buddhism, in tradition it does say that if you don't observe 'sila', if you're not ethical, you're not really human. To be human is to be ethical.

Perhaps one shouldn't distinguish oneself from the animals - it's not, if you're human you're ethical - because animals aren't ethical - for sometimes animals are in a manner of speaking, ethical; in the sense that they can't be unethical in quite the way that human beings are capable of being. But apart from that, to be human is to be ethical; to be truly human is to be ethical: to have consideration for others, to live together with one another in accordance with certain agreed norms. You might even - to go back to our previous discussion - say that to live in a community, especially a so-called 'spiritual community', all higgledy-piggledy, is not really to live like human beings. It's just like beasts having their lair, you know (Laughter) in the same area. It's more like a rabbit warren with everyone having his own separate little hole. You see what I mean?

Human beings should be able to agree on a common way of life, common behaviour, if you get

me. So, far from being a spiritual community, it's not even a human community. You should aim at being a human community first. Animals don't wash the dishes, [102] they just leave the chicken bones and so on just lying there. But human beings shouldn't. Well, they shouldn't have chicken bones, anyway, really human beings - but you see what I mean. Shouldn't use these highfalutin terms like 'spiritual' and 'enlightened', prematurely - not until you've established yourselves as human beings or established your credentials as human beings. You're not really human; just beginning to emerge from the animal level and you're talking about spiritual life and enlightenment. No. Just be human first. That'll be a very big step in the right direction.

You haven't even succeeded in being, say, a good friend, a good citizen, a good mother, a good father, a good brother, and you talk about spiritual life. You've got to lay a proper foundation. See what I mean?

To be human you've got to have the Confucian quality of human-heartedness. You've got to have a foundation of Sila. In India I gave a lecture by request on 'Sila - the Foundation of Spiritual life'. It might be of some interest over here too. It's been translated into Marathi. I've got it.

But again, this is an aspect of understanding where we really are now, before going forward. Perhaps we're sort of 3/4 animal and only 1/4 human. Well, we've got to become fully human.

All right, just one more quotation. Let's read the next one:

"In the Mahakarunapundarikasutra:

It is difficult to be born human and to win the perfect and unique occasion. It is hard for a Buddha to appear in the world. It is difficult to have an inspiration for the good and wholesome, and to fulfil the vow acquiring the good."

S: (Repeats quotation) ... It doesn't mean it is hard for the Buddha himself to appear in the world, it means that the appearance of a Fully Enlightened being in a world in which, in an age in which there is no knowledge of the path to Enlightenment - it becomes very rare. "It is difficult to have an aspiration for the good and wholesome." It is so easy to be led astray, so easy to hanker after the bad and the unwholesome, the unskilful. It is difficult "to fulfil the vow of acquiring the good". When you Go for Refuge, when you start living a spiritual life, it's as though you make a vow to acquire the good, to master the good, to become at one with the good, with the skilful, even with the universally skilful, but it's very hard to fulfil that vow. (Pause)

So these quotations I think, - a few or the quotations so far are just throwing light on this very fact from different points of view.

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You notice it is difficult to be born human and to win the perfect and unique occasion. It is only when you 'win the perfect and unique occasion' that you are said to have the precious human body.

Shantideva in the Bodhicaryavatara, I think goes into this fact that, this aspiration for Enlightenment, in this case the Bodhicitta, appears from nowhere. Do you see what I mean? Here you are, as it were, animal rather than human, then somehow or other there arises this aspiration, after spiritual life, huh? You want to devote yourself to the skilful, to the good. In the case of the Bodhicitta, Shantideva says 'it's like a blind man finding a jewel on the dung-heap' - the jewel being the jewel of the Bodhicitta itself. It seems in some ways extraordinary that aspiration after the skilful, after the good, should have arisen. Presumably it's because there is this real pretension in human beings; that they're not - whatever appearances may be - just human, or farther still, just animal. There's another element, a purely spiritual element which is present, so to speak, even if

it doesn't ... sooner or later it does begin to manifest and then the spiritual life begins.

As I said some days ago, perhaps it is difficult to conceive of human beings except as essentially spiritual beings. Anyway, can we leave it there. (End of Tape 14)

[104]

Linda Moody: Bhante, could you amplify something from yesterday? It's the third thing about the stableness of the elements of existence taught in the Noble Doctrine, because I thought I was clearer about it than I was. Is it like, that the means of communication are stable? Say, for example, if all knowledge of the language in which the Buddha spoke or the sutras were written disappeared completely, then, in a sense they would have no means of expression. Is that one of the things that is meant by this or is it something else?

S: No. It seems to refer to the content of the communication, not to the form. Because, even supposing all knowledge of the original language in which the Buddha spoke had died out, well, provided the texts had been translated into another language before that happened, you would still have the Dharma available - even though the means of communication had changed ... in that way. No! The stability of the elements of existent thought in the Noble Doctrine refers to the fact that the Universe goes on in the same way. Do you see what I mean? What is the content of the Buddha's teaching? That in dependence on A, B arises; well, this fact still holds good. That remains permanent, that remains constant. And because that remains constant, it remains possible for us to practise the Buddha's teaching as it is based upon something that holds good all the time. It is not based on temporary cultural conditions. (Pause) Or is that not clear now?

Linda: I found it confusing because I can see how it couldn't hold good. How could it not remain stable? I mean, for instance, in stating it ...

S: Ah, but the content of a spiritual teacher's teaching could refer to something that was not based on the real order of things but on something of only temporary significance. When I gave the example, for instance, of the first four verses of Genesis taken literally, that is not based on an unchanging order of existence, see what I mean? It's based upon a temporary theory which is acceptable at one time but not at another. Whereas the content, say, of the Buddha's Teaching is that all things are impermanent. That doesn't change, that remains a stable basis for practice. A teaching that reflects that, continues to have a basis and reality, in facts.

Linda: But would it be the Dharma if that weren't so?

S: No, it wouldn't. That is why the Dharma is the Dharma. But there can be 'pseudo-Dharma'. There can be pseudo-spiritual [105] teachings which are not so based.

Linda: Oh, I see ... well, it's important that you get on to the right teaching.

S: Yes. You get hold of the teaching which does in fact reflect reality, which does reflect real facts which pertain to the permanent order of existence, not just to temporary social and cultural - even psychological - phenomena.

Linda: So could you sort of come across a teaching that purported to be the Dharma but it wasn't actually the Dharma?

S: Yes, whether it used the word 'the Dharma' or not. You certainly could come across any number of those. (Pause) In a way, it's clearer in the original language, say, in Sanskrit, that it speaks of "the stableness of the elements of existence" - which is dharmas in one sense - "taught in the Noble Doctrine, the Noble Dharma".

In a way, it's a bit of a pun but it does help to make it clearer that the Dharmas that constitute the Dharma are stable. That is to say those teachings - it can also be understood in that way - those realities are stable. So they are as much a basis for practice now as they were 2500 years ago. The Dharma hasn't become invalidated by some new discovery about the nature of existence.

But, yes, not all teachings that purport to be the Dharma, or purport to be spiritual teachings are in fact such. They have therefore, no such stability. The Dharma is grounded on the nature of things. (Pause) Is that a bit clearer? (Linda: I think so maybe when you all get back to from wherever you came from, one useful thing might be to have more speakers' classes and try to put across in the form of a talk some of the points that we have been raising in the course of these ten days. Do you have much of that anyway, giving of talks? Do you have any Speakers' classes, most of you?

Anjali: In the Mitra study class last session, we did.

S: Good. This is one of the things we noticed in Tuscany: that how many of the mitras, what a high percentage of mitras, were able to give really good talks. I think the Order members were a bit taken aback. (Laughter) At least two of them were as good as any of the Order Members and there were half a dozen at least who were really good, without being quite as good as that. So there may be quite a lot of unsuspected talent around. Or maybe there's no reason why some of the more experienced mitras shouldn't stand in, say, for Order members sometimes when they're invited to say, to give a talk [106] in a school or to, you know, some particular social group. I mean, mitras have been around for four or five years and all those Dharma study groups, and there's all those Mitratas and so on. They should be able to give a talk which is appropriate to a group of that sort? Anyone ever done anything of that sort?

Daphne: I did last year.

S: How did it go?

Daphne: Very well.

S: Good, good. So it can be done. (pause) All right, let's carry on then. Someone like to read? Bottom of page 16.

Marion: "In the 'Gandavyuhasutra': It is difficult to turn away from the eight unfavourable conditions; to obtain birth as a human being and to win the pure perfect unique occasion; it is hard for Buddha to appear in the world. It is difficult to have all senses; to hear the Buddha's Dharma; to associate with virtuous people; to find truly spiritual friends; to receive methodical instruction and to live a proper life. It is difficult in the world of men to realize the meaning of the elements of existence taught in the Buddha's Dharma."

S: So this quotation [covers] much the same ground as we've covered already. We're still really concerned with the eight unfavourable conditions and, by implication, with the eight unfavourable conditions. Though there are one or two somewhat new points which we raised in this particular quotation. Did you notice them? Points we haven't encountered, in this lot very specifically?

Voice: To associate with virtuous people?

S: Yes, that suggests Kalyana Mitrata. And to find 'purely spiritual friends'. I mean, this hasn't been really raised before, has it? But I think everybody appreciates how important - how necessary - that is, 'to associate with virtuous people' - those whose actions are skilful and positive or whose thoughts, words and deeds are skilful and positive and even more than that - to

find truly spiritual friends . (Pause) Well, there's quite a lot one could say about spiritual friends and spiritual friendships and no doubt, you've heard it all before; no doubt you've read all the relevant Mitratas and so on, or maybe you've heard talks ad infinitum on the subject and maybe you think that it's one of those subjects which has been pretty well covered. Or is there anything which, perhaps, still isn't clear? Well, if there is, better speak up. (Pause) Are you all quite clear about Kalyana Mitrata? It's importance, significance, nature?

[107]

Megha: Why is it that there is a tendency to think you can't develop Kalyana Mitrata with someone of the opposite sex?

S: What is the ____? Did you say tendency?

Megha: Well, there's a general sort of feeling that you can't do it.

S: Well, in a way, the question answers itself. (pause) Don't you think?

Megha?: You can't generalize these things.

S: Sometimes you can. (Laughter) There's no knowledge without generalization, even though one recognizes that there are exceptions to every rule. But if it is said that well, there can't be Kalyana Mitrata between people of opposite sexes, what does one really mean? What is one really getting at? Or what is one being careful about, that is to say?

Linda: Not making a mistake about what Kalyana Mitrata really is.

S: I mean, it goes back a bit - or is somewhat similar to - what we say in connection with the second stage of the Metta Bhavana where you're advised not to try to develop the Metta towards somebody of the opposite sex, because you are trying to develop a non-erotic kind of love, yeah? (pause) So, where is the difficulty? Not that Kalyana Mitrata between people of the opposite sex is never possible but it is attended by difficulties. One could at least say that. And it's best to keep the two things separate - that is to say, the spiritual relationship and the - let's say, sexual-erotic relationship; because, you know, the sexual relationship can be very strong and can come in the way of the spiritual relationship for most people. It's as though you're on two different wave-lengths at the same time. I think it's very difficult to be on those two different wave-lengths at the same time with the same person. (Pause)

Linda: What about people who are strongly attracted to their own sex? I mean, you know, they have a definite erotic attraction to them?

S: Well, in that case - it would apply in that situation too. And of course (chuckle), as I mentioned the other day, if someone says: "Well, what about people who are bisexual?" - well they just have it more and more difficult. (Laughter) See what I mean?

Linda: I wondered if, say, in the second stage of the Metta, where you choose somebody of your own sex to keep out that erotic element in the course of trying to develop friendship, but then suppose, [108] if it was somebody, a man, who found men strongly erotically attractive would it be better for him to think of a woman?

S: Oh yes, Maybe we've dealt with that in other groups; but I said "yes", because it is not a question absolutely of either a male or a female. It is a question of someone not, in that stage, thinking of someone to whom you are normally erotically attracted because that is not the emotion that you are trying to develop. You are trying to develop metta which is a non-erotic love. So, when you are trying to develop that, do not think - at that stage at least - of someone of

the opposite sex, in as much as the likelihood would then be for you to develop an erotic feeling rather than a feeling of metta. So the criterion is the nature of your response to the particular person in that stage. If it so happens that you are stimulated in that way by someone of the same sex, all right, then you can just as well direct your Metta towards someone of the opposite sex. You see what I mean? And no doubt in some cases, that is what happens. But then again, if you say you are bisexual, well, (Laughter), that makes it even more difficult. You just have to try to find someone - anyone - (Laughter) towards whom you can develop just a feeling of Metta with no admixture of any other feeling. Do you see what I mean?

So it's much the same in the case of Kalyana Mitrata. If you can find someone of the opposite sex with whom you can genuinely have a relationship of Kalyana Mitrata, fair enough. There's nothing to rule that out absolutely. But as a matter of fact, as a matter of experience, we find that Kalyana Mitrata isn't all that easy to develop. It can shade off into other feelings. It can result in a sort of erotic entanglement if you are trying to develop it with someone of the opposite sex. So you try to keep the two things separate, because you are trying to develop Kalyana Mitrata. You are not having a relationship or trying to develop a relationship.

Rosy A: Bhante, do you think it's helpful to try to develop a relationship of Kalyana Mitrata with someone that you already have a quite a strong mundane kind of friendship with? Is that an advantage, or can it be a disadvantage?

S: Well, it depends on what you mean by developing a relationship of Kalyana Mitrata. I don't think you can develop it alongside the mundane friendship and have a sort of double friendship going on. But you can think in terms of deepening the mundane [109] friendship. Why should it be just mundane? Why can't you not bring in a spiritual element? Why should you not try to share your deeper interests? Sometimes it may not be possible. You may have, a good, say, working relationship with someone in the office, say, get on with them quite well, so you might think: "Well, let my try to deepen this, - let me try to talk to them about Buddhism". But they may not be interested. They may just not want to hear. Well, in that case, it's too bad. But there's no reason why you shouldn't try to develop your ordinary, maybe mundane friendships into something more than that. I would think of it as trying to deepen one's mundane friendships, not sort of develop another sort of friendship of the Kalyana Mitrata type alongside that mundane friendship. Do you see what I mean? (Pause)

Voice: Could you say something about at what stage a mundane friendship becomes a spiritual friendship?

S: Well, the term was used by Rosy, it wasn't my term, but maybe I would have said 'ordinary friendship' - a friendship just based upon ordinary, non-spiritual interests. I mean, maybe you work side by side with someone for several years, or maybe they are your neighbour or you get to know them at a club or maybe you get to know them at college. And yes, they are quite good friends and you do certain things together, - talk together, have coffee together. Do you see what I mean? And this may happen over a period of some years. Maybe you talk about your friends, talk about your common interests, but you don't touch quite on spiritual things. I think the spiritual side develops when you can bring your deeper, spiritual interests more out into the open, actually discuss them. You see what I mean? And share that sort of interest and even that sort of ideal. Almost as if the friendship becomes a spiritual friendship when you both recognize that you are thinking in terms of individual development, - you are not just thinking in terms of a happy life. I mean, mundane friendship is based in a way in helping each other to live a happy life, in a very ordinary sense and wishing well to each other in that sort of way. But a spiritual friendship develops when you start feeling that you just want to grow and develop and the other person also feels like that and your friendship comes to be placed more on that sort of basis - that you've not only got that shared interest in human development, in spiritual development, but you're going to try and help each other to develop.

Voice: Friendship with an element of inspiration.

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S: Yes, yes. But sometimes, of course, we use the expression 'Kalyana Mitrata' in the sense of the sort of friendship you get or inspiration you get from somebody who definitely is spiritually more developed than you. In that way, the Kalyana Mitra shades off into the Guru as it were. In some Buddhist texts, the term 'Kalyana Mitra' is used instead of Guru. But, in either case, whether it's Kalyana Mitrata on the level, a sort of horizontal Kalyana Mitrata or whether it's a sort of vertical one - you are helping the other person to develop. You share that ideal of human development. (pause)

Rosie Ong: You would discourage people from having sexual relationships then?

S: Discourage anybody? Well, that would be a rather bleak undertaking wouldn't it? (Laughter) Now, I think that, if one is going to be realistic, one has to accept that, well the vast majority or people, even those who are seriously involved in the spiritual life and think quite seriously about spiritual things, don't feel prepared to give up sex. So then the question arises: Well, how is one going to incorporate that into one's spiritual life? Or at least, handle it in such a way that it does not get in the way of your spiritual life, or prevent you developing spiritually.

But I don't think, certainly not in this country - that it is really realistic actively to discourage people from having sex ... partly also because there is such a lot of guilt associated with it on the part of people who've been brought up as Christians, that one doesn't want to encourage that sort of feeling of guilt. And, if you were to discourage people from having sex, well, they, would very likely feel that it was because sex was something wrong or bad, etc. etc. So I think it is a question of adopting a realistic attitude towards it and making sure that even if you are involved in a sexual relationship or sexual relations of one kind or another they don't get in the way of your spiritual life and your spiritual development. That you give them definitely a secondary place. If, on the other hand, someone really felt naturally inspired to lead a celibate life, you shouldn't discourage them from that in fact you should encourage them. I think sometimes in the West, we go to the other extreme. If somebody wants to be celibate we think there is something wrong with them: "They must be inhibited, or they must be repressed." This is not necessarily the case.

I am sure there are some people who genuinely have a feeling for celibacy in a very positive way. One meets sometimes very young people of that kind. And it's really a shame that people tell them "Well, it's something that you've got to go through"; [111] "it's all sort of life, you shouldn't run away from it; you can't evolve or develop properly without it." That's all nonsense. So you mustn't go to that other extreme. Such people will be, I think, a small minority but they do exist and they mustn't be discouraged from following their particular path. I mean, they mustn't be made to feel guilty for wanting to be celibate (Laughter) as if there was something abnormal about them; that's really strange.

Vajrasuri: Is there anything inherently negative in physical sexuality, that - sexual acts - which is inherently going to inhibit the spiritual development?

S: Well, what does one mean by inherent? Because one finds that in connection with sex, very very powerful emotions arise, including unskilful emotions. And, sometimes it's very difficult to see whether they are actually identical with that particular instinct or activity or whether they are just very closely associated with it. Do you see what I mean? For instance, to give a concrete if rather crude example: supposing you'd had a sexual relationship with somebody for some time. You may feel all fine and healthy and normal etc. etc. as if there was nothing negative about it. But then one day, you might discover that your sexual partner is having a sexual relationship with somebody else, and very often in circumstances of this sort, what do you feel? You feel very badly let down. You feel, very, very angry. You might feel murderously jealous. Do you see what

I mean? These sorts of emotions arise very quickly and easily in connection with a sexual relationship. So, that being the case, can one be so sure that sex is a nice, neutral, healthy sort of activity? Ideally, perhaps it ought to be, or even is. But, in practice is it? One is sometimes really stirring up a hornet's nest when one gets involved in this sort of thing. Is that sort of disturbance, with all those sort of negative emotions arising, or even the possibility of them arising - is it very conducive to spiritual development?

There was a saying of Oscar Wilde: "Youth is wasted on the young". One might even say, 'sex is wasted on the young'. They can't handle it; very often they're not mature enough. (Laughter) See what I mean? It's the comparatively mature person, which usually means the older person, I'm afraid - who is able to handle it and keep it within bounds. (Laughter) Well, this is a rather odd line of thought but you can see what I'm getting at. (Laughter) And the [112] older person very often is reasonably mature, has got a more relaxed attitude towards these things; even if they find that their lover is going off with somebody else, they think: "Well, never mind; too bad" - (laughter) "Never mind, well, I've other interests in life" and they're not too badly affected. But the very young person can be really devastated.

Voice: Isn't it something to do with the expectations of the whole thing?

S: Well, of course, that is part of it. If you were brought up on love's young dream, and to think of sexual union and a cloud of romance as being the be-all and end-all of human life and it doesn't quite work out like that - you end up, you know, washing nappies in the sink (Laughter) while he's gone out to play golf with his friends or something. Well, one wonders what's happened to all the romance and all the exhilaration that you glimpsed perhaps in earlier days. I think that if one is brought up to expect too much from marriage and sex, you are sure to be disappointed. And I think that in our civilization, in our culture in the modern West, there's an over-valuation of sex. I really do think this. People expect too much from it. They expect, almost, salvation from it and well, obviously it can't give you that. It can be - yes - pleasurable, but not really very much more than that. And one shouldn't expect more from it than something pleasant, something highly enjoyable - leave it at that. Don't expect it to solve all the problems of existence, solve the riddle or mystery of life. It's certainly not a sort of ideal.

Rosie Ong: Do you think then one could give it up quite easily?

S: I think that if you don't idealize it and expect too much from it and if there's no neurotic addiction, as sometimes happens, I won't say you could give it up more easily but you can prevent it, as it were, from getting out of control. It could be an element in your life which can be reasonably integrated without disturbing your life from time to time.

Vajrasuri: There's an aspect of energy that, you know, it's said, that sex grabs the largest amount of energy - it's quite a primal basic. And if this so-called (?) seems discharged through the sexual act, does this mean there's less energy left over for spiritual development?

[113]

S: Well, I don't think one can generalize about this without making a distinction between men and women ... I'm not sure whether it's the same for women as for men. But I must say that in the case of men it is yes and no. (Laughter) Is isn't quite that sexual energy is a certain, definite, limited quantity so that if you expend it sexually it is not available for other purposes and if you don't expend it sexually it therefore, is automatically available for other purposes. I don't think it functions like that. I think that for most ordinary men, a certain amount of sexual activity enhances the general energy but not beyond a certain point. Beyond a certain point a law of diminishing returns sets in and you actually have less energy. Do you see what mean? I think for the majority of men, especially young men - a certain amount of sexual activity has a genuinely stimulating effect, and you can do more than you could have done without that sexual activity as

a stimulus but, if you become too absorbed in the sexual activity, too much energy is going into it, then you cease to be able to do very much else and that point differs of course, with different men; and individual men just have to find out, in the light of their own experience, just where that point is. Now, whether it's the same for women or not, I can't say but this is how it is in the case of men.

Debbie Seamer: Going back to Kalyana Mitrata, you know, you were saying a couple of days ago about, initially, it makes it easier to maybe live with people with similar ideals, like, or maybe do visualization practices with them or work or something like that. And does it help initially in your relationship with a Kalyana Mitra to be able to respond to a kind of similar affinity with somebody? I mean it must help.

S: This, in a sense, raises the question of the Kula - the spiritual family in the more Vajrayanic sense. For instance, you might feel more attracted to a Kalyana Mitra who say belongs to let's say, the Lotus family. Maybe that Kalyana Mitra's spiritual practice is connected more with Amitabha and you maybe feel a spiritual affinity for Avalokitesvara who belongs to the spiritual family of Amitabha. That may be a factor which draws you spiritually closer together a feeling that you belong to the same Kula, the same Buddha family.

Debbie: Ah, interesting, isn't it?

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S: But also, I believe, it works in the other way. You can feel attracted to someone - spiritually attracted to a Kalyana Mitra - who is connected with another Buddha family, think that that is complementary, and that in that Kalyana Mitra is what will help you sort of balance your overall attitude more. Maybe you're drawn by nature more, say, to Avalokitesvara but your Kalyana Mitra is more drawn to Manjusri, so you might think more: "that's good for me, because I should be reminded of that wisdom aspect all the time. I'll be prevented from developing in a one-sided fashion." So you may feel it's better to have a Kalyana Mitra who belongs to a complementary Buddha family, so to speak. Do you see what I mean? There's no hard and fast rules. It can work in so many ways. I mean, the important thing is that there should be that relationship of Kalyana Mitra. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: I've often wondered how Tara somehow belongs to Amoghasiddhi and Avalokitesvara's from Amitabha. I've often wondered about that.

S: Ah, well, it isn't really a problem. Tara tends to be a sort of generic figure. Tara tends to be the female Bodhisattva and of course primarily there's a green Tara and there's a white Tara, and it's the green Tara who belongs to the family of Amoghasiddhi and the white Tara who belongs to the family of Amitabha. In fact, she's usually identified with Pandaravarsini, the white-robed one, who is the spiritual counterpart of Amitabha. (pause)

Megha: Bhante, you said 'generic figure'. Tara was a 'generic figure'. What does generic mean?

S: Well, general, one might say. Generic: pertaining to the genus rather than to the species. If you see what I mean? (Laughter) It's not so much, that there is, from a certain point of view, just one Tara figure. Tara stands for a whole class of female Bodhisattva like figures of different colours, forms, numbers of hands and so on. See what I mean? She stands for the whole class, that whole genus. So it's not that there's just one figure identifiable as Tara. Maybe one needs to be a bit more specific about, you know, the white Tara, the green Tara, the red Tara - Kurukulla is sometimes called the Red Tara, and she also belongs to the family of Amitabha.

Rosie Ong: When you say that Amitabha is the Sambhogakaya of [115] Sakyamuni, what does that really mean? Does it mean that it's another translation?

S: Well, perhaps, one needs to go back to this question of the different levels, the different Bhumis, the Karmabhumi or Kamaloka, then the Rupaloka then the Arupa-loka. The Rupa-loka being the plane of, let's say, archetypal form. So the Buddha can, as it were, exist on all those three levels. When the Buddha gained Enlightenment, it's as though within himself he sort of embodies all the different levels of reality, all the different levels of existence. So, yes, he still has a physical body, but since he is now Enlightened, that is now called the Nirmanakaya. And he also exists on this higher level. He exists on the level of the Rupa-loka, so, on that level he exists as the Sambhogakaya. But he also exists on the level of the absolute, of the ultimate reality, because he's gained Enlightenment. So, in that sense, on that level, as it were, he's the Dharmakaya, or we speak of the Buddha's Dharmakaya.

So the Buddha is said to 'possess' these three bodies - it's sometimes translated - in the sense that his existence or his being - his personal being, comprehends all these three levels. He exists on all these levels. In the case of ordinary, unenlightened human beings, well, they just exist on the Karma-loka level. In the case of yogis and great meditators, well, they go up, a bit further to the Rupa-loka level. But in the case of a Buddha, he has ascended to the level of ultimate reality so he exists also in the Dharma-kaya as well as in the Nirmanakaya and the Sambhogakaya. This may be as close as one can get to this in just a few words.

Rosie O: On the level of the Sambhogakaya, he's identical with Amitabha?

S: Yes. On the level of the Sambhogakaya, he sort of appears in various forms and, there are principally five forms. That is to say, the five well-known Buddhas. But, then there's a further development whereby, there's a series of human Buddhas according to Buddhist tradition - sometimes five are mentioned, sometimes seven, sometimes twenty-one are mentioned. So a tradition developed correlating a particular human Buddha with a particular Sambhogakaya Buddha. That is to say, with a particular aspect of the Sambhogakaya, and it is said that that particular aspect is especially reflected in that particular historical Buddha. So, in the case of Sakyamuni, he is said by tradition to be connected with Amitabha. And each of [116] the other human Buddhas - like Kassapa and so on - is connected with some other aspect of the Sambhogakaya. That's a sort of schematization, one might say of this teaching. But there are some books on Buddhism which set forth the whole in a sort of chart-like form: which Nirmanakaya Buddha corresponds to which Sambhogakaya form - which Sambhogakaya form has which Bodhisattvas and so on. (pause) Anyway, how did we get into that from Kalyana Mitras?

Voice: Kulas

S: Ah! Kulas, yes. Anyway: 'to associate with virtuous people, to find truly spiritual friends'. But there's also something new here: "to receive methodical instruction and to lead a proper life". 'Methodical' instruction, ahh! Do you think there's any particular significance in that?

Voice: Step by step, as in the need for regular steps.

S: Yes. Not random, not haphazard. And I think that this is a very important aspect of the connection with the Kalyana Mitra. A Kalyana Mitra if he is, or she, more experienced than you, takes you step by step. You don't want to sort of jump about let's say, in accordance with the Kalyana Mitra's own personal interests. One of the things his Kalyana Mitra may be very interested in and enthused by is, say, the Perfection of Wisdom texts. So you go to see your Kalyana Mitra and talk to him about nothing except that and sort of suggests that you read. But next time you go your Kalyana Mitra may be very much into something else - maybe Zen or maybe the Theravada. So he'll talk to you a lot about that. You may end up by getting confused because you are not being taken step by step in accordance with your needs. But I think it's important to remember that too where the Kalyana Mitrata relationship is between people who

are relating as it were, vertically rather than horizontally. (Long Pause) Otherwise, the quotation seems to cover material that we really already have dealt with. I think there are going to be a number of these scriptural quotations - sort of illustrating, going from past position on this subject of the unique occasion and right juncture and how they meet in the precious human body. Let's go on to the next text extract

Rosie O: "And in the Bodhicaryavatara, the unique occasion and [117] right juncture are very hard to Obtain."

S: Well, that's pretty obvious, isn't it? It represents a combination of circumstances that isn't very easy to bring about. Carry on then with the illustrations and quotations
(End of Side A)

Rosie Ong: "A simile to illustrate the difficulty is given in the Bodhicaryavatara:
The Exalted One said:
Just as it is difficult for a tortoise to put its neck
Into the hole of a yoke tossed about in a great ocean,
So also it is very hard to obtain existence as a human being.

The following is taken from the Yan.dag.pa i lun:

If this great earth should become water, a yoke thrown into it by a man would be tossed about to the four cardinal points by the wind. In a thousand years a one-eyed tortoise would not be able to put its neck into it (how much less chance is there for a being to be born human)."

S: Hm, a very famous illustration or parable from the scriptures. At the end of 1000 years, someone throws a yoke into the ocean some versions say 'golden yoke' but that doesn't seem very reasonable because if it was of gold it would sink (Laughter), so a wooden yoke. You know what a yoke is, of course, don't you?

Rosie Ong: It's like a toilet seat. (Laughter)

S: ... you weren't all brought up on farms ... A yoke is something you put across the neck of the ox or whatever's drawing the plough. So it's got a sort of half hole in it. So supposing you were to throw one of those into the ocean, and supposing there's a turtle swimming about somewhere in the ocean, and supposing every now and then he just pops his head up to the surface to get air. Well, if you were to throw that yoke into the ocean at the end of every 1000 year period, the chance of that turtle - that one blind turtle (Laughter) that happened to be there - poked his head up through the yoke at that one particular moment at the end of the 1000 years when the yoke was thrown in: it'd be very unlikely to occur. So the possibility of human birth is an unlikely as that. So, what does one conclude from that? Well, you're very lucky to be a human being. I mean, the parable is meant to make you appreciate - perhaps you can or perhaps you can't when it's put in this particular way - but to help you appreciate just what an opportunity it is to be a human being; how valuable, how rare the opportunity [118] is that you are a human being and you are born in a country where one can have access to the Buddha's teaching - you are able to practise it. You've got your health and you've got your intelligence; you've got all your senses. How lucky you are. (Pause)

Linda: It puts things on a vast scale, put like that.

S: If you can really take it literally, well, you'd be overwhelmed with the thought: "Oh, how lucky you are. You have been a turtle that did poke his head through that yoke. You're as lucky as that." Think of all the beings who are not human beings. Think of all the human beings who don't have a chance to hear the Buddha's teachings. Think of all the human beings who don't have a chance

to practise meditation, to grow and develop, etc., etc. It's as though you put [your head] through that yoke not once but hundreds of times. So, you know, the moral of the thing is: Well, don't waste the opportunity. Sometimes it seems to me really quite sad to see people wasting their opportunities. Sometimes they've come along to the Centre but, instead of making proper use of the Centre, well, they spend their time maybe in chatting - something of that sort. Well, make the best use of one's opportunities. You've come so far, well, just go a little bit further. Maybe Enlightenment isn't very far ahead, um? (Laughter) It's as though you've come, - well, as I said to you or the others yesterday - it's as though you've come two-thirds of the way already. You've got so far. (Pause)

Kay: What are those things - the non-human beings that come and listen to the Dharma?

S: Well, the name or the word for them in traditional Buddhism is 'devas' - angels in a way, although it's not quite the same. Invisible presences. They like to hear too. Maybe they wish that they were human beings.

Vajrasuri: Can they practise to any extent?

S: Well, if they make the contact with, say, the Buddha or a teacher of the Dharma, yes. According to the Buddhist tradition, it says that they can practise. But, as it were, left to themselves, their tendency is just to be absorbed in that deva-like state. Well, there are human beings also like that, as we know.

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Paula: You get the impression reading texts like this that the Universe is absolutely packed full of all kinds of beings that you have no conception of.

S: Well, that's true even in ordinary biological sense. You know in a single acre of grass there are so many different forms of life. We don't always realize that. They're just living there, side by side with us, leading their own lives - these ants, and bees and worms, yeah? Well, that's just the animal forms leaving aside the vegetable forms. I don't know how many species of plant there would be in our five acres here. It could well be several hundreds, and some dozens of species of animals ... apart from the cats; well, we've got the moles and the hedgehogs; we've got the field-mice and the dormice, rats? Have we got rats? I'm not sure about that. And then there's worms and ants and bees and mosquitoes, and flies of various kinds. There might even be lizards and sloe-worms. Did I mention hedgehogs? (Laughter and affirmation)

Dhammadinna: The pond life.

S: Those little bugs that skate of the surface, not to speak of the birds. You know, the blackbirds, and the thrushes and the swallows and the swifts and the martins and the robins and the tom-tits and the crows and the pigeons. So many, huh? But we're not all that aware of them, are we in as much as we can be, even living in the country, or perhaps because we're not country people. But in addition to that, I mean, in Milton's words - "Millions of spiritual beings walk the Earth". I mean, some peoples are very conscious of this ... the spirits of the dead ... the spirits of vegetation, the spirits of trees and stones. They're very aware, these people. And sometimes one may become very aware oneself and, in certain circumstances under certain conditions, that one is living in a very living world, a very alive world, not a dead world a world full of beings, full of creatures.

Rosie Ong: Do you feel conscious of the development? Would it be better to be born a human, rather than a deva?

S: Well, Buddhist tradition says, that it is better to be born as a human being because the deva

existence is so pleasant that you can become forgetful of the spiritual path, very easily.

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Rosie Ong: But, say, provided you didn't forget - that you wouldn't forget (Laughter)

S: Well, that's a bit like saying: "Well, suppose you were born a human being but never encountered any suffering". Highly unlikely. It would be hypothetical.

Rosie O: I was wondering if there was any other reason for being born human beings because, perhaps, there are other human beings who you can help; or something like that?

S: Well, the principal advantage of being born a human being according to Buddhist tradition is, you know, it is possible to follow the Dharma and, there isn't so much pain and suffering that you're really distracted by that but there's a little so that you're not really able to settle down with the world we're in. hm? But however, it is, well, here we are as human beings with a wonderful opportunity. We can grow; we can develop. There's no point in sort of hankering after the deva-realm, or wishing that we'd been born as an angel, instead.

Rosie O: Are they myths or are they true about Bodhisattvas living in heaven to develop?

S: Well, what is the difference between myth and truth? (Laughter) I don't object to you thinking that there are Bodhisattvas actually there, maybe waiting to come down when the opportunity offers. This is the traditional view. I don't personally find it difficult to accept at all. It seems only right and proper. Thank heavens they are there!

Dhammadinna: Does Buddhist cosmology believe in human life on other planets? You know, this is supposed to be one world ...

S: Well, it believes in life on other planets; whether you (call) it human, that's difficult to say. But it speaks in those sort of terms. It speaks in terms of gods and men; Nagas and Maharajas in other worlds. The Mahayana Sutras so speak. Whether you are literally to understand there is life here, just as there is on this earth or whether you're simply to take it figuratively, understand that there is life in some form - intelligent life, [121] life capable of Enlightenment - that's another matter. (Pause) Anyway, let's go on.

Paula: "The term 'individual' is used because a human existence is difficult to win by those who are born in the three lower forms of life (denizens of hell, spirits, animals)."

S: Better read the following paragraph too because that gives the explanation.

Paula: "The reason for this difficulty is that the body which represents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture is obtained by the accumulation of merits. Those who are born in the three lower forms of life, however, not knowing how to accumulate the merits that accrue from good deeds always act and live evilly. Therefore a human body can only be acquired by one who, though he is born in the three lower forms of existence, has very little evil and possesses an accumulation of merits accruing from good deeds that are to be experienced in some other form of life."

S: This doesn't seem very clear if you see what I mean. It's as though Gampopa is faced with the difficulty of explaining how, once you've been born into the lower spheres - that is to say: animals, hungry ghosts and beings in hell - you can be born at all on the human level. Do you see what I mean? Sometimes it's said, well, you're born on those levels as a result of unskilful actions but that when they have been expiated, so to speak, good actions that you performed before that, will then come into operation and you'll be reborn on the human level. That is one explanation.

But then (one) could say. "supposing there aren't any good actions of that sort?". Supposing you don't have a store of skilful actions performed earlier on in some still more previous life. What then would you do? Because it is generally agreed that it is difficult, if not impossible, to perform skilful actions as an animal or as a hungry ghost or as a being in hell. So, how are you to get out?

Gampopa suggests, well, you might sort of get out if you've been performing very little evil, and also have got merits from the past, but that doesn't seem very convincing. Some Mahayana sutras would say, well, it's very difficult for you to get out unless you come in contact with a Bodhisattva and you can't come in contact with a Bodhisattva by your own efforts. Therefore, the Bodhisattva has to come into contact with you. And Kshitigarbha has to descend into hell; do you see what I mean? What is one to [122] make of all this? It is of course, clearly pre-evolutionary, as it were. Pre-evolutionary science. Or it is a straightforward question of, for instance, animals being reborn as human beings? Or human beings being reborn as animals? Can one think in those terms?

Dhammadinna: I find it hard to think in terms of someone who'd been born human going back to an actual, physical animal state. Though, suppose you could be born in an animal-human state, if you see what I mean - not very aware.

S: Yes ... Personally, I'd be inclined to think, - once a human being always a human being - even though you may become a quite degraded human being. But in what seems to be the oldest strata of the Pali scriptures there seems to be no reference to any individual instance of a human being reborn as an animal, or vice versa. Though, you know, there are the Jataka stories, but they're not strictly canonical. (Pause)

Rosie Ong: It's rather odd to go to hell, isn't it?

S: Or, are reborn as hungry ghosts?; pretas. In some ways more easy to imagine someone being reborn as a hungry ghost than as an animal or even being born in hell.

Dhammadinna: Is that because we see those two states - either psychologically or an another realms - but the animal realm is here with us so ... (S: That's true, yes) ... it's somehow a different dimension.

S: Yes, it's a different framework of reference. It's as though you're being asked to take the animal realm in two quite different senses - the realm of the animals that we encounter, the biological species and the animals in the sense of, you know, animal-like states.

Vajrasuri: At least, in the hungry ghosts, the hell realm, it's known that they are in a state of suffering, whereas in the animal realm there's only ignorance.

S: Yes. They are not even able to know that because there is no reflexive consciousness. So how, therefore are they able to get out of that state? Presumably only by coming into contact with some [123] higher kind of being, as a dog comes in contact with human beings, or a horse.

Voice: I was reading in that book about the Cathars and their beliefs, about animals - well, even plants - as being on an evolutionary scale, and animals were at the highest on the scale as pets, rather than primates because they were in contact with human beings.

S: But whose pets, you might ask, were human beings originally? (Laughter) Well, some cultures will say they were the pets of the gods because there are all sorts of culture myths about gods descending and teaching primitive human beings the rudiments of culture. I mean, most civilizations have these sort of culture myths and culture heroes. It's very difficult to co-ordinate all these different sorts of frameworks of reference.

Dhammadinna: When you talk about looking at it from an evolutionary scale, you're still somewhere looking at it as mundane development. And yet, earlier on we said man in order to be able to become enlightened must have a spiritual element, or not just be biological, must be spiritual. It's almost like there's two things coming together. It's actually quite hard to say where human life comes from and where life itself comes from.

Annie Murphy: And Bhante, why doesn't the good merit which seemingly has been put aside, possibly, - why is that inoperative? Why does the being go to hell? Why doesn't that mitigate its circumstances?

S: Well, it might be because he might have gone to lower sort of hell. (Laughter) - a cold hell instead of a hot hell.

Annie Murphy: But don't you think that in the very mitigation of that, that good merit would have been used up?

S: That depends on how much punya is there in stock, so to speak, to your account. But I don't think this is really very satisfactory. Gampopa is doing his best but I don't think he has said the last word on the subject by any means.

Voice: Are there any explanations of Buddhist cosmological human birth?

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S: Oh yes. I mean, there are a few cosmological sutras, and there it is explicitly stated that human beings - to use that term - you know, originated when the gods of a higher realm, sort of looked down and saw this sort of sticky mass which was, in a sense, the Earth and became attracted and started putting their fingers into it then tasting it. And it gradually sort of enveloped them. Then they were born as human beings. So this is the traditional - or one of the traditional - views. SO that human beings are the product of, according to this view, as I've pointed out in the Survey, of an ascending biological order and a descending spiritual order. See what I mean?

Dhammadinna: That's what I was trying to gather ... ?

S: Um. But this all requires sort of further assessment and reworking. It isn't easy to combine these different frameworks the scientific, the traditional, the psychological, and symbolic and so on. This still has to be done, I think. But meanwhile, you know, we have to take our stand in what we're really certain of.

Well, we're certain that here we are as human beings and that we can develop and we're at least certain that - whatever might be the truth about these other realms, these other worlds, at least we can, as it were, pass through them, if we're not careful, in the course of this present life. We can be in states corresponding to these different realms. We can be in a state of neurotic greed; which means we can temporarily fall into a preta realm. We can, you know, become intensely competitive and this way fall into the asura realm. We can be in states of intense hatred or sort of we can become temporarily insane and in that way fall into the hell realm. Or we can be temporarily preoccupied merely with eating, sleeping and reproduction and that way, fall into the animal realm. All within the scope of this human life itself. At least we can be sure of that - and also that we can explore the deva realm, even, from this human state itself. And beyond. At least we can be sure of that - whatever maybe the ultimate truth about these other realms, and whatever may be the ultimate truth about karma and rebirth.

Paula: You talked about, the other day, if you kill unintentionally, it doesn't have such a karmic effect. If you reach a certain level of awareness and you fall into one of these realms in accordance with more awareness is that ... ?

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S: I think if you were really aware that awareness would inhibit those mental states - those unskilful mental states - which would make it likely that you would fall. (Pause)

Paula: Sometimes you do, and you know what you're doing when you're doing it - that it's temporary but its ...

S: Well, the traditional view is that, in that case, it isn't quite so bad. But at least, there is that element of awareness even though you are not able to act upon it. (Long Pause) Let's go on then:

Jenny: "The great usefulness is pointed out in the 'Bodhicaryavatara': Since man's aim is achieved.

'Man' is in Sanskrit 'purusa', which means by etymology to have power or ability. Since within the body which presents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture, there is the power or the ability to secure rebirth in higher forms of life and also to realize ultimate good, we speak of 'man'. Further, since this power is of three kinds, strong, mediocre and weak, man also is of three types, excellent, mediocre and inferior. This is declared in the 'Bodhipathapradipa':

Man is to be known in three ways:
As inferior, mediocre and excellent."

S: This is quite important really. "Man is in Sanskrit purusa, which means, by etymology to have power or ability. Since within the body which presents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture, there is the power or the ability to secure rebirth in higher forms of life and also to realize ultimate good, we speak of 'man'." They speak of 'purusa'. So, this means that man is defined as essentially a being capable of development: a being with the power to develop. Here that development is defined in terms of higher rebirths as well as attainment of the ultimate good, but we can none-the-less, accept the definition in a general way, yeah? That 'man' means: 'one who has the power to develop'. 'Man' here of course, clearly means human being.

Dhammadinna: Is the etymology of 'man' in English, similar?

S: No. Sanskrit 'purusa' - pronounced purusha, doesn't correspond to the English 'man'. In Sanskrit, there is 'manusha', which I think corresponds to 'man' and I think - though I won't be certain of this - but 'man' is connected with 'mind'. I could look it up in the dictionary to make quite sure. Let me just do that. It [126] might be worthwhile ... "Man", aha! (Laughter): "Man, plural men Anglo-Saxon: mann - double 'n' - mann (Mon), manner, akin to old something or other - Dutch and old High German: mann; German: mann; Old Norse: (Mutta or Manna); Gothic: manna; Sanskrit: (Manu?); German and Dutch: Mensch; and probably to English 'Mind'." probably. Hm. So it's probably connected with mind. The Sanskrit 'manu' is generally considered to be connected with (manuva?) and manas So they would regard the manusa as the being endowed with manas. That is to say, with regard to the word 'manusa'. But with regard to 'purusa', man is the being endowed with power: the power to evolve, which seems, you know, more significant, in a way ...

Dhammadinna: I was going to say that you have that basic idea about mankind ... in a word.

S: You see, Sanskrit, is quite interesting because the traditional system of Sanskrit grammar tries to trace - whether scientifically or not - all words to a certain small number of basic roots. Do you see what I mean? And clearly, in this case 'purusa' is traced to a root meaning power or strength or capacity. If that is so, that 'purusa' really does come from that root, that is quite interesting as indicating that at a very early period, a very primitive period, the speakers of that language had the idea, so to speak - though it might not have been an idea in the modern, conceptual sense of

man, 'purusa' as the being with the capacity to grow, to develop, to evolve, to obtain higher states. (Pause) Again, how scientific, this etymology is I wouldn't like to say traditional etymologies aren't very scientific, but they're instructive and revealing never-the-less. I think this root 'pu', a bull, for instance, in Sanskrit is ('upumgabha'?) - you know, which means 'powerful'. (Pause)

"So man is in Sanskrit, 'purusa' which means by etymology to have power and ability. Since, within the body which present a unique occasion and effects the right juncture, there is the power or the ability to secure rebirth in higher forms of life and also to realize ultimate good, we speak of man." So this also means that if you are not evolving, if you're not developing, if you're not growing, you're really a man, you're not really a human being. To be human means to evolve. If you're standing still, or if you're regressing, you're not being true to your destiny, so to speak, as a human being. You're not fulfilling your destiny, so to speak, as a human being. You're not truly human. So, one might say: [127] yes, in this sense also, man is an essentially spiritual being a being who grows not just biologically, not just cyclically but spiritually, creatively.

Rosie Ong: What sort of went wrong? (S: Pardon?) I mean, you're sort of saying man is naturally ...

S: Ah, what went wrong? Well, there are various accounts. According to one account, Eve gave Adam an apple. (Laughter) But, you know, there is the other account. There is this Buddhist account of, you know, in the cosmological suttas of the beings, the demons, on higher level of existence being as it were, tempted, being drawn, attracted, to the lower levels, getting entangled. But even that isn't an ultimate explanation by any means. That only leads to, well, how did it all start? It's as though there is really no explanation on any terms that we can understand. We come back again to our present situation - and that's all that we know really, as truth. We can speculate about how it all happened, how it all began. But it's difficult really to know, to be sure. We don't know whether we are risen apes or fallen angels. We don't really know. Could be a combination of both. But we do know that we can grow, we can develop, we can evolve. Now, by our own conscious individual effort. We know because there are historical precedents. (Pause)

Rosie Ong: Traditionally, are Buddhas ever said to grow?

S: No, no. That would be a contradiction in terms from a Buddhist point of view because even a Stream-entrant doesn't return. Irreversible (unclear). So Buddhism wouldn't subscribe to the idea that there was some original state of perfection from which someone, somehow fell away. Because if you can fall away from perfection once, you can fall away from perfection, again. You see what I mean? If you, for instance, if you were originally Enlightened and fell away from that and became a human being and now have to retrace your steps and gain Enlightenment again, what is the guarantee that you won't fall again? Well, the Buddhists would argue that according to Buddhism, Enlightenment is a state from which you can't fall. Therefore, there is no question of your having originally been Enlightened and having fallen from it. Some people try to say: well, you know, you did fall from a state of original perfection but, by falling and by having to retrace your [128] steps, you've gained an extra and additional experience and now you are, as it were, more Enlightened, more perfect than before. But then it doesn't really solve this difficulty because you were less Enlightened before. So you haven't fallen away from Enlightenment, from perfection. You fell away from something else. So, how did you come to be of that nature? So there's still no explanation. So Buddhism contents itself really by saying there's no sort of ultimate origin of the process but we know that it's going to have an end. And how you got into the samsara, so to speak, well, it's impossible to say. But we know you can get out of it. Whether you are a fallen angel or a risen angel we don't know, but you can rise to a higher level by your own efforts as an individual in this life. That is known. That is sure. That is so. At least you can be sure of that. (Pause)

Otherwise, you can trace it back. Well, what were you in the previous life? The life before that? The life before that? Is there any first beginning to the process? According to Christianity, there is a first beginning when God created your soul out of nothing. You see what I mean? And, place you on the Earth straight-away, just for one life. There are different views among Christians, among theologians, as to whether God created the soul separately from the body or whether he created the two at the same time. Do you see what I mean? (Pause)

Christian theologians aren't sure about these facts. But they are sure that we only live once and that the soul was created by God out of nothing. That's the Catholic view. Some hold that, on death, the soul dies and you sleep or rather you go to sleep and is brought back at the time of the last judgement. Others hold that the judgement takes place immediately after death and you then go to heaven or to hell. Some theologians hold that there are two judgements - one after death and one the last general judgement at the end of history. (pause) But is (Laughter) there really any way of telling with any confidence because they're based on the Bible which is the word of God, as it were. If you don't accept the Bible as the word of God, can you be so sure? In any case, there are different interpretations of the Bible, different views among theologians.

Dhammadinna: That seems really odd to me only having one life quite an odd idea - doesn't give you much of a chance!

S: I think historically belief in rebirth has been more widespread [129] than belief in just one human life with nothing before and an eternity of either, you know, punishment or reward afterwards.

Dhammadinna: It's really crazy. (Pause)

S: So it's clear from this passage that man is a being - or the being - with capacity for further development. So you're not being a true human being unless you are activating or actuating that capacity. (Pause) And we may say therefore, that if man, has that capacity to develop further, even to reach the highest good, well, man can be defined as an essentially spiritual being. You cannot consider man ever just as a mundane being. If you do, you do, so to speak, injustice to man. That means also that he cannot ever be satisfied with a purely mundane destiny. And if you have any kind of capacity which is not being fulfilled, well you don't feel satisfied. Suppose you've got a capacity to draw and paint and no opportunity of development, well, you feel sort of vaguely dissatisfied that there's a whole part of you is not being used, an area that is not being developed that is ready for development. (Pause)

Rosie Ong: But sometimes it's very unsatisfactory to think of your destiny as separate from other people.

S: Uh, uh, (pause). Well, you don't just from the spiritual point of view because you are all equally capable of further development and you can help one another to develop. Maybe that is the mechanism as it were. Mutual co-operation. Kalyana Mitrata. Maybe that is the way that human beings develop ... Because to go back to this definition of purusa, if man is defined as the being with the capacity to develop, to achieve higher levels of existence, then man is essentially a spiritual being.

Paula: A lot of people say that the spiritual life is unnatural.

S: Ah yes. In that case if man is an essentially spiritual being; any other life except the spiritual life is an unnatural life. I really think this is so. That people who are living a purely, let's say, secular and materialistic life are not leading a life that is natural for a human being to live and maybe never before in [130] the history of the world have people lived like that because so called primitive peoples don't live like that. They have a philosophy. They have a, we might say,

spiritual view of life. It's only in the last two or three hundred years that people have started living what they would now regard as a natural life but which is really perhaps a highly unnatural life. To live without religious faith; to live without a spiritual philosophy of life, without a spiritual goal or a means of spiritual development, this would seem to be a highly unnatural state of affairs. It's not as though spiritual life is sort of grafted on to man from outside I mean, spiritual life is part of his very being, its very essence of it. You see what I mean? So I think if anybody speaks of spiritual life as an unnatural life, I think it means one really needs to discuss all these of questions.

Voice: Because a lot of times people find it very difficult. (Pause)

(End of Tape 15)

S: What do you think they really mean? What do you think they really have in mind? What are they referring to?

Jenny Roche: The amount of effort.

S: Hmm, Yes, perhaps.

Rosie Ong: Animal instincts.

S: Hmm, yes, sex. This is the question you raised. Maybe something like that was at the back of your mind. Maybe, you know, the spiritual life is the unnatural life. It stamps on things like sex.

Rosie O: Or the other way around. Sex was unnatural.

S: Ahh! That's an interesting point of view. (Laughter) Well, perhaps it is. If you are essentially or were once originally an androgynous spiritual being, and have fallen from that higher state, well, in that case sex would be unnatural, because duality would be unnatural, - differentiation into two sexes would be unnatural. Hmm, yes, one could take that view.

Annie Murphy: Yes, well, when we were talking yesterday, I was [131] feeling very much the hermaphrodite had a head start. (Laughter) (S: Say that again) ... that when we were talking of androgyny yesterday, I was feeling that the physical counterpart, the hermaphrodite would have a head-start in fact, because they would be all in one, you know, but ...

S: But one isn't necessarily psychologically androgynous, because one is anatomically hermaphrodite.

Annie Murphy: Yes, but it could be so, you know ...

S: Yes, well, there are hermaphrodite forms of life. Some snails I think are hermaphrodite and ... (Voice: Worms), I think there are some forms of life which go through phases of hermaphroditism.

Greta: I think also that people saying it's unnatural to lead a spiritual life - they are confusing it with the ethical Christian conditioning. They think of sack cloth and ashes, - the degradation of man, you know. Not being able to, you know, with the Christian conditioning, but being able to aspire to being Christ ...

S: Yes. Is it because in Christianity, religion is not thought of in terms of development, is it? But if man is an essentially developing being, and if spiritual life consists in developing, well, what would be more natural than the spiritual life?

Voice: It feels natural to grow. I mean, the first puja I ever went to felt, ahh!, at last, you know, like a real capacity ...

S: So perhaps, we should cultivate much more the thought that it is natural to develop, that when you are developing, you are acting in accordance with your deepest needs, in a way, your deepest instincts. One might even, almost, put it in that sort of way. That's why we have that deep sense of satisfaction when we are developing, as though we are really fulfilling the role of our own being. We are really doing the thing that we were, so to speak, born to do, i.e. developing. You're fulfilling your own nature; you're fulfilling the law of your own nature and also if you can think in that way, you won't think of spiritual life as being something so difficult, really, or at least not something which is impossible. Because sometimes it is as though people don't really believe that [132] it is possible to grow. If you're convinced that that is what your nature really is, well, what could be more natural than to grow, to develop.

Linda: It's difficult on a sort of worth-while level, though, isn't it? It's not a sort of irritating kind of difficulty. I mean, it's a sort of difficulty of grappling with something you overcome in order to go forward, rather than just an irritation-type difficulty. (S: Yes)

Annie Fowler: What about people who are developing, but aren't in touch with the Dharma. I've got dear friends who I would think were developing but they don't respond to the Dharma.

S: I think those people if they could come into touch with the Dharma, would develop more rapidly.

Marion: Some people say that the Dharma is whatever enables you to develop.

S: This is Dharma in a sense of formal teaching - so one could say the Dharma, or religion in the true sense, is whatever helps you to fulfil the law of your own nature, which therefore, helps you to develop. I think there are quite a number of things which purport to be religious teachings, but which don't really help human beings to develop, which in fact obstruct their development.

So I think one has to be quite clear about this. Sometimes if you point out such things or you point out that certain teachings, generally regarded as religious teachings, don't really help people to develop, well, then one is accused of being intolerant. But one has to point out that sort of thing in the interests of religion - of spiritual life itself. (Long Pause)

Anyway, "Further, since this power" - that is to say the power or the ability to secure rebirth in higher forms of life and also to realize ultimate good, in fact, "since this power is of three kinds, strong, mediocre and weak, man also is of three types, excellent, mediocre and inferior. This is declared in the Bodhipathapradipa: Man is to be known in three ways: as inferior, mediocre and excellent." In other words, if man is by nature a being of the power to grow and develop, it is again only natural that there should be different degrees of that power - that some men should [133] have more of such power, others less. In this way, there came to be established three grades of human beings. So would you like to read on about the inferior man:

Gay: "The inferior man, without falling into the three lower forms of existence, has the capacity of attaining the state of either god or man.

He who by any means whatsoever
Provides the pleasures of Samsara
For himself alone,
Is called an inferior man.

The mediocre man can win a state of peace and happiness after he has freed himself from Samsara.

He who turns his back to the pleasures of the world
And abstains from evil deeds,
But provides only for his own peace,
Is called a mediocre man.

The excellent man has the capacity of attaining Buddhahood so that he is able to work for the benefit of all sentient beings.
He who seriously wants to dispel
All the misery of others,
Because in the stream of his own being he has understood the nature of misery,
Is an excellent man."

S: So there are three levels or grades or degrees of power to develop - to achieve higher states of existence. The first is you've got enough power to obtain a pleasurable state within the Samsara just for yourself; that is to say, a good, happy, human birth or rebirth or a birth or rebirth in a higher heavenly realm. Do you see what I mean? Then in the second case, you have enough power to gain, or to attain, a state of happiness, above and beyond the Samsara - that is to say, Nirvana. But again for yourself alone. But then there is the third degree or level of power, when you have sufficient power to be able to gain Enlightenment, to be able to gain the highest state of perfection, outside the Samsara, but not just for yourself, but for others too. In this way, you get the three goals, so to speak, of different kinds of religious life: the goal of the first person, is heaven for himself; the goal of the second is Nirvana for himself, that's the Arhant; the goal of the third is Nirvana for himself and others; that's the Bodhisattva Ideal. There are these three degrees or levels of power or capacity.

Megha: They sound like a rather staggered form of ... you've got a certain amount of power, that you can't actually develop ...

S: Well, I don't know whether we went into this in this group or the other one but, as the White Lotus Sutra makes clear, you can [134] pass from one grade to another. Do you see what I mean? The three Yanas come together in one Yana - in having gained Arhantship, that having been your ideal, your goal - you can awaken to the possibility of there being a higher goal still and then move on to that. (Pause)

Linda: Actually it's interesting that those three grades - because even within what we call the Buddhist world, practising Buddhists today, you can see those three types; the three aims being the ideals.

S: Yes. Some people are aiming at a happy rebirth, either on earth or in heaven just by observing the precepts and making offerings to monks. Some are thinking in terms of individual Enlightenment just for themselves, and others are following the Bodhisattva Path and working for Universal Enlightenment - Enlightenment for themselves and others. And these traditions, these different historical traditions, still exist in Buddhist countries.

In this third verse, third quotation, "He who seriously wants to dispel all the misery of others, because in the stream of his own being he has understood the nature of misery, is an excellent man". What does this suggest? What is the significance of this?

Dhammadinna: There is insight into the truth of Dukkha, suffering.

S: Yes, but it's a bit more than that.

Rosie Ong: The two hells ... (Unclear) ...

S: Yes, there is that too. "He who seriously wants to dispel all the misery of others because in the stream of his own being he has understood the nature of misery".

Marion: Yes, compassion.

S: Yes. Because he reflects how he himself feels suffering, and he sees that other beings suffer just as he suffers. So why should he devote himself simply to the removal of his own suffering? Why should he not also devote himself to the removing of the suffering of others. Other people suffer as you do, so in this way, his aspiration as a Bodhisattva develops. Do you see what I mean?

I mean, taking his own experience of suffering as a sort of model, he is able to understand that others also suffer. They also are in need of deliverance. So he isn't concerned only with his own [135] suffering and his own deliverance. He is concerned with the suffering and deliverance and the Enlightenment of all. In this way, he comes to follow the Bodhisattva path.

Debbie Seamer: 'In the stream of his own being also' - ?

S: The term in Sanskrit and Pali would be (Santana). This term is used instead of Atma, just to make it clear that the so-called individual being is in a state of constant flux and change. It's a stream, not a thing. So it means, in his own being, in his own self, he has understood; within his own experience he has understood the nature of misery. (pause) Anyway, let's go on about the great usefulness of the human body.

Daphne: "About the great usefulness of the human body the Teacher Candragomin has said:
Who can deprive of his fruit a man
Who, having obtained a human body, has gone to the end of the ocean of birth,
Who sows the good and wholesome as the seed of excellent enlightenment
And who has greater virtues than the Wish-Fulfilling Gem?
The Path which can be traversed only by a man of great inner strength,
Cannot be followed by gods or serpent demons,
Not even by Garudas, Vidyadharas, Kinnaras, or Uragas."

S: This is quite a - "Who can deprive of his fruit a man who," etc., etc. No one could deprive you of that fruit, because that fruit is not external to yourself, it's what you yourself have become, no one can take it away from you; you can't be taken away from yourself. That's why it's sometimes said that when you die, you take nothing with you but your good deeds. You take them with you, so to speak, because they are part of you. They are not just touchable skilful actions. You consist of those skilful deeds; they are you. So if you go, you take them with you. You can't leave them behind in the way that you leave behind house, and family and wealth and all the rest of it. Your good deeds go with you. There is a very interesting sort of representation of this idea in one of the old Medieval English Morality plays. I don't know if you know it? It's called Everyman, eh? Do you know this? It's very Buddhist in parts; it's well worth reading. I saw it during the War, put on the stage as a ballet, which was very very interesting. I don't think it's enacted in modern times, but there is this figure Everyman and one day he gets a message or a messenger [136] comes to him and the messenger is Death: "You are being summoned by the King" i.e. - God, you know. "You've got to go on a journey", in other words, you've got to die. So he just goes to different people, asking them to accompany him. He goes to his friends; they can't accompany him. They make excuses, and his wealth, no, his wealth can't accompany him.

These are all personified figures, - in this way, he goes to so many people. They can't accompany him and then at last he thinks: "Ahh!, What about my good deeds. Maybe my good deeds will accompany me?" He thinks they must. So he calls out: "My good deeds, where art thou?" (Laughter) Then a voice comes from the ground saying, "Here am I, cold in the ground. Your

deeds have me sore bound that I can neither stand nor stir". In other words, his good deeds are bound hand and foot by his wicked deeds. So he sort of unbinds his good deeds, helps them stand up a bit and he totters off with him, his sole companion.

It's very very well represented. As I said quite Buddhist; written by some anonymous monk in a medieval monastery, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. It used to be enacted on occasion at various festivals in medieval times; so it's called 'Everyman' because this is Everyman's experience. No one ever heard of Everyman? (Voice: No) Maybe we should suggest that Jayamati does at least a reading of it - very dramatic and as I say, very Buddhist. You don't have to take the King too seriously. Actually the play opens with God, in fact, speaking, eh? and he says: "Where are thou - Death, thou mighty messenger?" He sends him to man; it's quite impressive in a way, if you regard God as a sort of personification. There is an introduction where he speaks about man just forgetting about spiritual things and needing a reminder. So Death is sent.

In the Pali text you get this idea of Death as a messenger. The Yama Dhutta being of course, the Dharma Dhutta. I gave a talk about this in India in my visit two years ago. The Yama Dhutta and Dharma Dhutta - Yama Dhutta being the messenger of Death, and Dharma Dhutta being a messenger of the Dharma. I sort of made some claim to the fact that the Yama Dhutta could also be the Dharma Dhutta. I think I spoke at somebody's funeral. Yama being the God of Death in ancient Indian mythology. So he sent out his messengers.

There is this famous Buddhist story of the man who dies and is dragged in front of the Yama Raja for sentencing - right in front of the King of Death and he pleads that he didn't know [137] he was going to die. He didn't have time to think about it. So it's not fair that he's being sentenced. So the Yama Raja says, "Well, I sent you so many messengers. Did they not arrive?" So the man says, "Well, no. No. I never saw any messengers." Then he says, "Ah, but didn't you develop grey hairs?" "Well, yes." "Well, that was one of my messengers." etc. etc. You see, the Yama Dhutta sent so many messengers but they are not understood as messengers. They were ignored. So as you start experiencing the signs of old age, you know, you start tottering a bit. You're not quite so strong, lots of grey hairs you know; you can't run and jump around as you used to. These are all messengers from Yama reminding you that "Well, time is drawing near. You are going to have to present yourself before the Yama Raja so make ready make sure you have got a little stock of good deeds - at least a few to produce when called upon to do so, otherwise, it may not fare very well for you".

This is a well-known little Buddhist story about the messengers of Yama, messengers of Death coming all the time. So you get the same sort of idea in 'Everyman', of Death as a messenger, or at least the last and final messenger. I mean, it doesn't just give you the message, he arrests you as well. As Shakespeare says, "When that fell arrest, without all bail, shall carry me away", hmm? There is no bail when that messenger comes, no habeas corpus. (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: I'm really grappling with the understanding that these fruits, what form do they come in as they carry over, or did you take them with you into death?

S: Well, you take yourself, you take your state of consciousness that state of consciousness which is you. Just try to imagine what you would be like if you didn't have a physical body. What would be left? If you can think in terms of a disembodied mental state, would it be a happy little disembodied mental state or a miserable little disembodied mental state. (Laughter) We're so used to thinking of ourselves in terms of the body - even identifying with it to a great extent. Whereas what's going to happen when the body is not there. You're just a sort of disembodied consciousness. Well, that's what you will take with you, so to speak. That will be you, bag and baggage. (Laughter) That will be the fruit of everything you've ever done. It will all be registered there. It has all gone to produce that.

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Rosie Ong: The Hinayana, places a great deal of importance on the final mental ...

S: Yes, it is said in the Abhidharma that it is the last moment of consciousness in this life which determines, which takes precedence in determining the nature of the next existence.

Rosie O: Which is a bit risky. (Laughter)

S: Well, no that's not correct. It's a bit more complicated than that. I've spelled it out in the 'Three Jewels' dealing with the Karma and Rebirth. What usually takes precedence is the so-called weighty Karma, either skilful or unskilful. Say you committed a murder or if you gained dhyana states. These are both weighty, and they would be of the greatest importance in determining the nature of the next life, the next existence.

Rosie O: Because dhyanic states are similar to things called Arupas?

S: Yes, well, there are rupa dhyanic states and arupa dhyanic states but it is interesting to note that the experience of dhyanas is regarded as a weighty karma. That is to say once you experience the dhyanas, if only for a short while, maybe even just a few times, even just once in your life, that will have a very powerful determining effect on the nature of your next birth or next rebirth.

Vajrasuri: It's that feel, sense or whatever - so that's the quality that exists when we no longer have a human body.

S: Those dhyana states exercise a very powerful modifying effect on your whole being, so in that way on the course of your future life, the sphere in which you are reborn.

Vajrasuri: There's nothing very mysterious about it, is there? It's all practical - it's already there in practice - you are in touch with it.

S: Yes. If there is somebody who naturally early in life attains dhyana states, the assumption is they've come from a world in which dhyana states are natural, i.e. from the Rupaloka or even the Arupaloka. Do you see what I mean?

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Vajrasuri: Oh, that explains something!

Rosie Ong: But one doesn't get stuck in a kind of Rupaloka feeling?

S: Well, one doesn't get stuck in it permanently because, that is the nature of all these mundane states of existence - they don't last forever - when the karma that caused you to be born there is exhausted, well, then down you come to another level.

Linda: What about people's last wishes when they die? If they're not complied with, you know?

S: Well, empirical evidence does suggest, that people whose last wishes are not complied with can be sort of held back by that. They can sort of hover around so to speak, trying to get people to comply with those wishes. It's as though whatever they did express was very important to them, whether rightly or wrongly so. It doesn't matter whether you're buried here or buried there. Some people do attach tremendous importance to this and if the consciousness of the departed spirit, so to speak, sees that he or she or it has not or the body has not been buried or disposed of in accordance with his or her or its wishes as previously expressed, well, it's as though some disturbance takes place. It's very difficult to explain this, but there seems to be some empirical evidence to suggest that that sort of thing can take place. There are many stories. (Pause) So you

can't really be deprived of your fruit as you can't be deprived of yourself. (Pause) Right, shall we press on a bit:

Jenny: "This human body which presents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture, has the power to reject evil and to accomplish good, to cross the ocean of Samsara, to follow the path towards enlightenment and to obtain perfect Buddhahood. Therefore it is superior to other forms of life such as gods and serpent demons, and it is even better than the Wish-Fulfilling Gem. It is called 'precious' because of the difficulty of obtaining this human body and because of its great usefulness."

S: Yes, well, this is as it were, singing the praises of the precious human body. What you can do if you have a precious human body. So you know, whatever doubts one may have about the, as it were, mythological context of that kind of statement, there is no doubt about the truth of the statement itself - that one really is very lucky to be endowed with a human body. So should therefore make the best possible use of it.

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Voice: What are the serpent demons?

S: I suppose they're the Nagas, - this previous verse mentions Garudas. They're sort of winged beings. The Vidyadharas, they are some sort of, I suppose, it's difficult - later on in the Vajrayana, the Vidyadharas had a quite different sort of meaning. Here it means more like a sort of magician or magical spirit, later on it meant the Tantric initiates. Kinnaras are sort of semi-human. The name is usually explained as coming from kinnara which meant: "What! Is it a man?" (Laughter) Uragas are the sort of breastgoers - that is to say, the serpents - those who go on their bellies as we would say. So I think serpent demons is either Uragas or Nagas. Something of that kind. It's very difficult to understand what exactly is meant - whether it's a sort of mythological creature or some species of human being.

Megha: What did you say Garudas were?

S: Garudas, is a sort of winged creature, a bit like an eagle. I think it's got a human head and a parrot's beak, something like that. It's very big and strong and winged. In Hindu mythology, it's the mount of Vishnu.

Annie Murphy: Bhante, why did you slip that bit in the end there about some sort of human being, I thought you said?

S: Aah, yes! Because Nagas are also supposed to have been a sort of tribal people, for instance in Maharashtra, Eastern Maharashtra, there is Nagpur, the City of the Nagas, so it is believed by some anthropologists that there was a race of people living in that area called 'Nagas', who were subsequently sort of mythologized but actually they were a tribal people. A lot of the Buddhist, ex-Untouchable Buddhists, believe that they are descended from these tribal people, Nagas, who were in fact Buddhists centuries ago.

I mean, Nagarjuna, is supposed to have rediscovered the Perfection of Wisdom teachings among the Nagas. Some explain that as amongst the serpent demons, but others explain it as among the members of that particular tribe who had preserved that particular tradition. (Pause)

Some people are a little bit sleepy today? Any reason? Is it just (that)? I noticed last year when we had our study retreat [141] at that people started getting very tired on the fourth or fifth day. There seemed to be a sort of general agreement. It was because they felt they'd taken in quite a lot of material, and they were beginning to encounter just a little resistance. They didn't think they were. It's as though this time you've stuck it out well. You've gone eight days, - that's pretty good.

(Laughter)

Vajrasuri: I feel as though I am still taking it in. It's all going in, eh ...

S: Even though we've just gone through nearly two chapters, we've covered a lot of ground. We've discussed a lot of different topics.

Vajrasuri: It's almost as though there is nothing more I can add or say to it now. All I can do is listen.

Rosie A: And write it all down as quickly as possible.

S: It's all on tape anyway. That's really useful because it's very difficult to consciously recall even all the main points.

Vajrasuri: Things seem to be getting simpler and simpler. (S: Good) As though there is less and less to be said. (S: Ahh) I just wonder why on earth I don't spend considerably more time in meditation. What have I been doing wasting such a lot of time.

S: Well, when you get back to those wide open spaces, and set up your cabin or meditation tent ... Australia should be a wonderful place from that point of view. No trouble or difficulty about retreat centres.

Vajrasuri: The air has a really good quality to it.

S: Ahh. Well, perhaps we'll finish there today a little early. Because the text is going to start on a quite different topic ... There's going to be quite an important discussion about Faith ...

(End of Tape 16)

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S: Bottom of page 18. Would someone like to read that?

Megha: "Yet, though difficult to obtain and very useful, it easily breaks down, because there are many causes of death and without waiting it passes on to the future. Thus in the 'Bodhicaryavataara': Living in pleasure and thinking: 'This moment I shall not die', is unwise. One should think: 'The time will certainly come when I shall become nothing.'"

S: "Yet, though difficult to obtain and very useful, it" - that is to say, 'this human body', "easily breaks down because there are many causes of death". "Without waiting it passes on to the future. Thus in the Bodhicaryavataara: Living in pleasure and thinking: 'This moment I shall not die' is unwise. One should think: 'The time will certainly come when I shall become nothing'" Is death an absolute end, according to Buddhism?

Megha: Nothing in terms of identifying yourself with a human body.

S: No, no. Won't there be another human body. There's a continuing consciousness, presumably, - So why does the text say 'when I shall become nothing'?

Marion: Is it to do with personality?

S: Yes, it's more like that - because the present physical body will no longer be there. So to the

extent that you've identified yourself with the present body, you'll no longer be there. If you've totally identified yourself with the present physical body, you won't be there at all. But there's certainly no complete and final cutting off at the time of death. That's called 'Ucchedavada' or annihilation as in Buddhism is one of the two extremes. There, certainly everything familiar, everything on which you've depended, everything on which you've relied and especially your physical body, become nothing.

Vajrasuri: Yesterday, we heard - we discovered that the fruits we carried the fruits.

S: Ah, right! Yes! Or what the fruits which are you carry on.

Dhammadinna: This says, 'Living in pleasure', so maybe you're [143] not actually building up good fruits.

S: Right. Yes. 'And thinking this moment I shall not die'. You notice it says, 'thinking this moment I shall not die'. It's not even thinking, well within these ten years I won't die - within these twenty years I won't die or even thinking within this week I won't die. But it's thinking 'this moment I shall not die'. Even that is mistaken because you don't even know whether you won't die this very moment. You can't guarantee it. No one can guarantee it. You may just drop dead on the spot right now. There's no absolute guarantee that you won't or I won't. Nobody knows. So 'living in pleasure and thinking: This moment I shall not die', is unwise - even that is unwise. You can't depend on anything. Can't be sure even of another minute's existence. Life is (really pretty) precarious. There might be a blood clot in your brain or something like that. (Laughter)

Well, these things do happen, don't they? So one should think 'The time will certainly come when I shall become nothing'. It's not easy to imagine this sort of thing: that one is going to die. It seems a very long way off, very remote, really over the horizon - over the hill, on the other side of the hill. You can't see the hill itself which is this life - your present life.

Greta: I think it always brings it home to mind when one's peers or someone one [has] been close to dies, it could ...

S: It should bring it home to one then, yes. Or perhaps it does for a little while, but one very quickly forgets.

Linda: It's strange that you do forget in a way, when it's so much a part of being born - it's the one certainty that you do have in fact. It's the one thing you totally forget all the time.

S: It's the one thing that is certain in life - it is certain that one will die. It's the one thing you can really depend upon. Presumably there's some comfort in that. (Laughter) That at least is certain. (Linda: There would be a comfort in that!) How useful do you think it is to bear in mind the fact that you are certainly going to die. Should you be thinking of it every minute? Or would that be counterproductive?

Dhammadinna: Useful if it doesn't become a source of despondency.

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S: Yes, indeed. It can be a useful recollection if it helps you not to waste time, not to waste your opportunities.

Vajrasuri: It's helpful to recognize that if ... what you're doing now is setting up conditions for the future. (pause)

Voice: There's an Indian myth that your own death stands behind your left shoulder and reaches

out and touches you sometimes.

S: It touches you like a policeman (Laughter)

Rosie Ong: There's this Kathe Kollwitz exhibition. (S: Who is Kathe Kollwitz?) She's a Polish woman and she does paintings of misery and death and (unclear).

S: You've been to see them?

Vajrapushpa: I think she made most of her paintings during the War - or some of them from around that time - the Second World War. I think she was living in East Germany.

S: So she shows her own death standing behind her like a policeman tapping her on the shoulder?

Rosie Ong: There are several depictions of death that she presented in different ways.

Vajrasuri: In the later Middle Ages (there was Death painted by) contemporary artists.

S: You mean the "Dance of Death". (Voices: in assent)

Anjali: One interesting thing that was said on this tape I heard made on Kathe Kollwitz's life was that, when she got too close to death, she ceased to respect it. She tried to portray it in her paintings ... which was interesting ...

S: "Cease to respect it" - what do you mean by that?

Anjali: She lost her awe of it.

S: Ah, right! yes. (Pause) What does one mean by 'death' in that context? As she got close to it she ceased to feel the awe of it the physical process of dissolution or what? (Pause) Or did she cease to be so afraid of dying?

Anjali: Yes, I think she ceased to be afraid of dying - but not in a positive way.

S: Ah, yes. 'Familiarity bred contempt'.

Rosie O: In the paintings there was a great deal of life in them. [145] She was very much in touch with her life and a great deal of life and she just wanted to hang on to it, I think. She did a lot of paintings about mothers hanging on to their sons and they were dying and things like that.

Dhammadinna: If you saw too much death, say in something like a concentration camp and you didn't have a positive philosophy - that would be underlined. It would be hard not to have a negative response to death or maybe the cheapness of human life ...

S: Yes, - you'd feel a bit cynical. (Pause) One feels perhaps a little of this in India where death is so common and so obvious. Where there's so much suffering, one just ceases to respond. Well, you just haven't got that capacity for response.

Rosie Ong: Old people in the East look forward to dying, don't they?

S: Umm, some do. (Laughter) Some old people prefer not to think about the subject.

Linda: Some old people here do look forward to dying, I think, actually I mean, especially if all their friends and the people they've been close to have died and they are sort of ...

S: Well, perhaps they have a firm faith they are going to rejoin them in the other world.

Marion: I often think it's not actually death itself that's (frightening), it's the illness and so on. Things that they actually ... death itself is just quite natural, somehow. (S: Mmm. yes)

S: It's the constant postponement of death that is terrible perhaps. (pause) All sorts of extraneous terrors, as it were.

Marion: It's the fear of losing your consciousness somehow.

S: Also ceasing to be in control of one's self and one's own life being a purely passive sort of object of vegetable matter - just sort of tended and turned over by other people, without your having any say, and just vaguely conscious perhaps and that's about all. So maybe it's not so much death as the process of dying, especially the prolongation of the process of dying - people contemplate (unclear).

Linda: How important is what happens to your body after you've died?

S: I personally don't think it's very important at all. Unless you have been so foolish, perhaps, as to have developed strong ideas on the subject during your lifetime and still cling on to them after death and be troubled by the fact that your instructions as regards [146] the disposal of your mortal remains are not being followed. Can't say that I'd be especially bothered about it, you know ...

Linda: I just wondered if it would have an adverse effect if say, you died and had a Christian funeral ... if you were a Buddhist? (Laughter)

S: I don't think it could have an adverse effect though it might have been better if you were able to hear, so to speak, as you were hovering around your own corpse, the sounds of the Metta Bhavana, the sound of the Karaniyametta Sutta or something of that sort seen all your Buddhist friends standing cheerfully around your corpse - not a black-robed priest.

Dhammadinna: It's quite nice to imagine your own funeral. (Laughter)

S: I can't imagine it would do you any real harm if you were sensible - even if you had a Christian funeral. Probably you were sufficiently established in Buddhism during your lifetime. But you don't have to have a Christian funeral, you can make provision in your will. Was it in this group I talked about that? (Voices: No) Well now, we're on the subject, I'd better tell you what to do.

You want to make quite sure that you have a genuine Buddhist funeral with all your friends happily around and rejoicing in the merits of the person who's just passed on. In your will, you must name a Buddhist executor. Do you see what I mean? It's not even necessary to say that you want to be cremated and have a Buddhist ceremony. Just appoint an executor who knows your wishes, because legally it is the responsibility of the executor or executors to arrange the funeral. They may if they wish, consult the relations but they have the final say - the executors do. If you die without making your will and without naming executors, automatically your next of kin have the final say. So if they are Christian and want you to have a Christian burial - if they are Catholic and want masses for the dead to be said for you, well that is how it will be. So the main thing is to name a Buddhist executor or executors, and of course, to make any other wishes that you may, clear to them; either beforehand or by getting them included in the will. If you wish that on the occasion of your funeral, there should be a grand party or something like that, well, you should make that clear beforehand. Or if you want your ashes to be scattered in Victoria Park (Laughter) or in the Thames or what ever - you must actually either get it all written down in your will by your solicitor or leave a letter for your executor or what ever. You see what I mean?

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But the appointment of the executor is the key to the whole business - not dying intestate and having relations take over doing to you in death what they couldn't do to you in life. (Laughter) So I hope none of you will be so (foolish) as to think, "well, I'm not going to die just now. " I hope you all make little wills. (laughter)

Linda: Can you make a will just to say what you want done with your body, because you haven't got money to leave or ... (Laughter)

S: Oh yes, you can go on for pages and pages. No doubt the solicitor will charge you extra but no doubt he won't mind. Yes, if you wish you can leave a very detailed instructions: size and shape of the coffin or whatever - brass or silver handles. After all the cost will come out of the estate that you leave (Laughter) - well if you don't leave anything, well, you'll just have to have a state supported pauper's funeral or whatever they call it or your friend will just have to pass the begging-bowl around to buy a few flowers.

I think you can be incinerated at the cost of about twenty pounds, two shillings and thrupence or something like that! (Laughter) I think it's gone up recently (Laughter) - it's more than that now.

Dhammadinna: It's quite expensive.

S: It is quite expensive. Once you get into the hands of undertakers, well, you're lost (Laughter) ... much of the estate. I think they take hundreds of pounds for practically nothing at all. The best is that the executor arranges things differently - don't do it through an undertaker. You don't have to employ an undertaker. A lot of people think you have to, but you don't.

We settled that once and for all, I hope, in connection with Vangisa's funeral. There was no undertaker involved. And we did it much better ourselves.

Kay: But do you always have to use their cremation incinerator? Couldn't you do it yourself?

S: No. There are restrictions. There are laws regulating where bodies may be buried and where they may be cremated. You can only have a cremation in a recognized crematorium - but when you use that, there is always a chapel. You can do exactly as you please in the chapel. If you want to take the cross down, you can do that. They won't mind in the least. You can change it - you can put a Buddha image on the altar. You can do all that - you have a perfect right to do all that. I said you can only cremate in the recognized crematoria - that isn't absolutely correct. If you can get permission [148] from a local municipality to have a cremation in a local field then that is all right! But most municipalities would not give permission. But I believe they have the power to do so if they so wish, especially on religious grounds or something like that.

Annie Fowler: What about burial? Where can people be buried?

S: Burial grounds.

Annie F: Actually in a church graveyard?

S: Well, usually burial grounds are attached to churches or chapels, but not necessarily so. I think humanists have got separate ones or something like that.

Dhammadinna: Sometimes there are areas of council burial grounds which are for different denominations, because different religions want different things anyway.

S: They would like to be together in death as in life! (Laughter) (Yes) I was quite amused in a

way going to Wandsworth cemetery for the - I imagine Order members must have read my account of it, but I mention it for the benefit of others ... - for the burial of an uncle of mine, about two years ago, and happened to be just waiting by the Polish Catholic part of the cemetery. And the strange thing was that they had affixed to all their tomb-stones, a photograph - that is, just the heads of the deceased. That seemed quite extraordinary. It was just as if the heads were just popping out of the ground. (Laughter) As a sort of little forest of heads (Laughter) ... all sorts of weird things - it seemed very strange that this is a Polish Catholic custom. It can't be a very ancient custom.

Annie F: They do it in Belgium as well. (S: Do they?) My mother's mother had one photographed.

Dawn: What kind of photograph?

S: Just an ordinary black and white photograph or sometimes a colour photograph of the deceased, popping out of his own grave, as it were.

Annie F: It's really nice that, because you can remember the person as they were. (S: Comments lost in laughter - V: as they are underneath!)

S: As they are or as they were?

Annie F: As they were. It's much more ...

S: I think it's distinctly odd and bizarre in fact. The fact that there were so many of them. They had all these fixed grins, as it were ... I don't know if they actually took the photograph after death or during life. It's not quite clear. (Laughter)

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Vajrasuri: How do you know, or do you have anything to say about how long the consciousness stays around the body or in the vicinity of the body?

S: Well, judging by various accounts that one has heard, in the last few days, I must say that I've had the experiences myself of people or their consciousnesses, so to speak, being around the body, up to a week. I've had some very odd experiences in this connection - I think it can be around a week, but I think usually two, three or four days.

Annie Murphy: Bhante, in the case of your friend who the 'soul-catcher' who eventually managed to release, with your aid, on that particular night, they where would he possibly have been? Because you weren't ...

S: I really don't know. But it was a very odd experience - I'll just mention briefly for the benefit of those who haven't heard this story - but maybe if you've all heard it, well, just stop me -.

This happened when I went up to Kalimpong in the beginning of '67. I was staying at my vihara and I sort of woke up, at about two o'clock in the morning. I looked at my watch a little bit later so I knew it was two o'clock - It was pitch dark in my room and - I was just lying on my bed by the window - and I just looked to the right, as it were, and to my surprise, there was a sort of pit in the floor. And standing in the pit, quite low down, was someone who had stayed with me in Kalimpong, several years earlier, in the early 60's, in fact. And who had left Kalimpong and lived down in the plains for a couple of years and who had died there - in '63 perhaps. So I saw this person standing down there in this pit, and looking extremely miserable, and I saw him standing there, just as clearly as I'm seeing you now ... even though it was dark, there was no light, but still it was as though at the same time, it was perfectly light, and I could see him quite clearly.

So it was as though he was sort of appearing to me for help. I think he had his hands folded like this - and he had in fact, died under rather sort of mysterious circumstances, as they say. He may well, have been poisoned in Western India, as an English man. So, anyway, what happened was: I sort of felt he was sort of asking for help so I was wondering what to do; then I remembered that some years earlier I had gone up to (Gantok) to see one of my Tibetan teachers called Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, a famous Nyingmapa Lama - perhaps the most famous of the modern Lamas - so I'd gone up to see him, and we were staying at the palace temple - I had to wait a little while [150] for him because he was busy - so when I entered his room he said that he'd just had to keep me waiting a little while, because a Lama who he knew had died and he was performing a ceremony for him. And especially reciting the Vajrasattva mantra, and he said that this was usually recited in Tibet for the benefit of the deceased person.

There is a form of the Vajrasattva, known as "the one who delivers from hell", so I remembered this. So I thought that well, maybe if I recited the Vajrasattva mantra, this will help Jivaka - that was his name. I was still seeing him standing down in the pit. Maybe the pit was about 8 feet deep and about 4 feet across and he was about 6 foot high, so his head came to about within 2 feet of the top of the pit, which was level with the floor. It was exactly as if a great hole had been dug through the floorboards and down into the earth.

So I started repeating this mantra - I was sitting up in my bed - and I saw the letters of the mantra came out of my mouth, like large illuminated letters and came out in a sort of chain and one after the other - I saw the letters just as clearly as I see you. And they went down into the pit. They formed a sort of chain, like a sort of garland, like this and he seized hold of the garland and he climbed up, you see. And at the instant that he sort of climbed up out of the pit, I heard the horn of the (Jogis).

Now who are the (Jogis)? The (Jogis) are a very strange sort of class or group or sect of Nepalese. What I was told - or had been told some time before - was that there was this sort of class of people, who were hereditary, or rather there is a certain group of people, a certain class of people who are called upon by the King every year to act as (Jogis) - the King of Nepal, that is to say when the King sort of summons them, they just have to go and they put on a certain (Jogi) dress and they have a special kind of rams' horn and they have traditionally the task of going around the whole Himalayan area, collecting the spirits of the dead. I'm not sure what actually they do with them or what happens. But they have the task of collecting them, perhaps taking them back to Nepal or some place, I'm not sure.

But anyway, they're quite well-known these Jogis, and what they do is they turn up at a village or town during the night and they blow their horns. The rams' horn makes a very strange sound and I was told that the dogs never attack them. The dogs are quite afraid of them, they just retreat whimpering. Even fierce dogs and the Jogi just blows his horn and collects the ghosts up. I seem to remember, he had a little bag or something like that even, over his shoulder. But anyway, he goes to each village and he collects the souls - to use that term - of those who'd died since the last visit of the last Jogi. [151] And they usually come round on the new Moon day or new Moon night, and then what happens is - the following morning, they visit the houses outside which they stood at night, blowing their horns and you have to give them some rice. That is to say, raw rice mixed with a few coins. Most Nepalese are very afraid of the Jogis; very afraid of them. And when they come to the house - with fear and trembling almost - they give them just a handful of rice and a few coins. The Jogis are usually from quite well-to-do communities but they have to go through this sort of ritual, as it were. So the Jogis are given the rice and a few small coins with sort of fear and trembling. People are really glad to see the back of them, and are quite afraid.

Anyway, sometime before that the Jogi had come to the Vihara, having done his bit during the night. So my boys and servants and so on were quite sort of scared. But anyway, I sort of made a point of talking to the Jogi and asking him what he did. So I got most of this information in that

way. He was quite an odd person and in quite an odd sort of mental state - quite difficult to describe: really a bit uncanny, you could say, a bit weird - not very pleasant. But anyway, he talked with me quite freely. My students were really afraid and a bit upset, seeing me talking to this Jogi. They thought something bad will happen, but I didn't have any such feeling at all.

So, anyway, as Jivaka climbed out of the pit, I heard the Jogi's horn blowing outside. It was then that I looked at my watch. It was two o'clock and then the whole thing vanished. So that was one of my experiences.

So you know, Annie is sort of asking, "well, where was Jivaka all that time?" He must have been dead about three years. So whether he'd been born into some other sphere of existence, like a Preta or something like that, I don't know. Could have been so ... But that was a quite strange experience. That's my only experience of that particular kind.

Greta: When you were reciting the Mantra, did you feel any loss or excess or energy because he was climbing ...

S: No. Nothing at all.

Vajrasuri: Was the Mantra in English letters?

S: Hmm? I don't really remember to be quite honest. I suspect not, but I won't be sure of that, quite ... No. I think it must have been Sanskrit or Tibetan because of the way the heads of the letters came. No. I don't have a clear recollection, but I think it must have been Tibetan or Sanskrit possibly. So it's difficult to know what to make [152] of such things. Especially ... (inaudible).

Linda: Did the Jogi come to the house the next day?

S: This I don't remember. I'm afraid sometimes one doesn't remember all the things one ought to remember. I might have even gone out the following day because I was only a week in Kalimpong. He might have called round while I was away. And also another little fact in regard to the Jogis, wherever they go, the dogs all bark furiously, but they never dare approach the Jogis. They keep well away from them. Jogis in Nepal is a form of 'Yogi', which is the same as a "jogi".

I'm not quite sure what particular caste it is but it's a particular caste or group of castes that they recruit the Jogis from. It's a hereditary sort of duty - that you go when your turn comes and get called. Whether it's still kept up, I can't say. It may well be kept up. (Pause) Anyway, that's just a little story as it were.

All right, let's carry on then:

Daphne: "Therefore, because of the difficulty of its attainment, of the easiness of its breaking down, and of its great usefulness, we should think of the body as a boat and by its means escape from the ocean of Samsara. As is written:
Standing in the boat of the human body,
You should cross the great flood of misery.
Since later this boat is difficult to get,
Do not sleep now, you fool."

S: "Therefore, because of the difficulty of its attainment, of the easiness of its breaking down, and of its great usefulness, we should think of the body as a boat". First of all, I suppose you could say, what was difficult to obtain. This is the human body, it was difficult to obtain and suddenly (it's apt to) break down or spring a leak or something like that. Well, yes, easy for the

body to break down and spring a leak and whatever and sink. And also because it's useful - the boat is useful for rowing or sailing. The body is useful for gaining Enlightenment. So 'we should think of the body as a boat and by its means escape from the ocean of Samsara. As is written: Standing in the boat of the human body, you should cross the great flood of misery. Since later this boat is difficult to get, do not sleep now, you fool.'

What does it mean: "Since later this boat is difficult to get"?

Debbie: Your chances of not having it, pushes you to (Enlightenment?).

S: Yes, right. (Pause) Do you remember the little pictures illustrating the twelve ordinary Nidanas? The outer most circle of the Wheel of Life. Isn't there a little boat there? (Voices: Yes.) What is that little boat?

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Rosie Anderson: The senses?

Voice: It's the Skandhas.

S: It's the Skandhas, isn't it. The boat is actually the Rupa Skandha, isn't it? And the other four are in the boat - that is the Mental Skandhas and one of them - Consciousness - is steering, hmm? So this is the same image, the human body as a boat. (Long Pause)

What do you think is meant by sleeping now? What is the sleep of the foolish person?

Voice: Just unawareness.

S: Unawareness, yes. Laziness, indifference, sloth and torpor.

Voice: Ignorance.

S: Ignorance.

Voice: Idleness.

S: Idleness, yes!

Linda: I suppose it's making the most of what you've got!

S: Indeed, yes! Making the most of your opportunities.

Voice: If you're asleep, you're not seeing the boat as belonging to the great flood of misery as well.

S: Yes, yes. All right, carry on to the next comparison:

Debbie: "Or, conceiving the body as a horse we should gallop on it away from the road of the misery of Samsara. As is stated:
Riding the human body as a race horse,
One should gallop away from the misery of Samsara."

S: Do you feel your body is a race horse, galloping along? (Laughter)

Voices: Sometimes. Like an old cart ... With a heavy load. (Laughter)

S: Not to say donkey cart. (Laughter)

Kay: Who's got the carrot in front?

S: Yes, right. Who's got the goad behind? (Laughter) It is a different image, because the boat is inert, isn't it? Whereas the horse is itself a living thing - is capable of its own motion.

Voice: (Useful in) emergencies, as well?

S: Yes, Also 'One should gallop away from the misery of Samsara' - [154] not just trot away, gallop away! (Voice: Canter) Canter.

Vajrasuri: There's a definite feeling in both those verses - of something as well as the human body - like the consciousness.

S: Yes, quite!

Vajrasuri: Steering that aspect of it.

S: That's quite distinct. In charge, in control ideally.

Vajrasuri: Riding, (and standing). (S: Mmm.) Kind of reassuring. (Laughter)

S: The horse, the horse symbol appears in other contexts in Buddhism, doesn't it? Do you remember?

Voices: The Windhorse.

S: The Windhorse. (Pause) Anyway, that is clear enough. Let's consider the next comparison:

Greta: "Or thinking of the body as a servant we should urge it on to good and wholesome deeds. As is declared;

This body of men like ourselves
Is only to be used as a servant."

S: So what do you think that means? Using the body as a servant?

Daphne: We shouldn't serve the body. We shouldn't be taken over by it

S: Yes, yes. You notice that progression of similes, from boat to horse, from horse to servant. An inanimate thing, an animal and now another human being. Hmm? is this a useful way of thinking of the body, do you think? Thinking of it as a servant, - thinking of it to be used as a servant - only to be used as a servant?

Linda: Depends on how you treat a servant.

S: Hm, yes! That's quite a problem, because nowadays in this country, there's people - people aren't used to having servants any more or being servants. But yes, it does depend how you use it. How would a bad master use the servant?

Dhammadinna: Overwork it and beat it.

S: Overwork it and beat it, yes.

Linda: Or neglect it.

S: Or neglect it, yes. A good master, how would he use his servant?

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Vajrasuri: Supply it with the things it needed.

S: Yes, supply it with food and clothing, rest - give orders clearly and consistently (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: Not confuse it!

S: Not confuse it, no.

Megha: It can be quite helpful for the servant to work for the master.

S: Indeed, yes.

Vajrasuri: Because it would be a pleasant existence. It wouldn't be difficult.

S: Of course, you can have a situation in which the Master becomes the servant and the servant the master, as in that film - I don't know if you saw it - 'The Servant' - which was very interesting, from that point of view - with, Dirk Bogart.. Do you remember that? The servant became the master. So it sometimes happens like that with the body. It should be the servant of the mind, of the consciousness, of the will, but sometimes it becomes almost the master. Or it's as though the horse gallops away with you. It goes out of control. It goes in the direction, it wishes to go. Maybe throws you over a cliff or something like that. (Laughter) Even the boat.

Greta: It's a bit like when one is intoxicated. (S: Yes) With whatever, youth or whatever. Then you are out of control.

S: Yes, yes.

Vajrasuri: What could it be that would take it out of control? What aspect would come into play to take it out of control?- Craving?

Dhammadinna: Or hatred usually ...

S: Of course, one mustn't press generality or the comparison too far. Of course it is the mind that is out of control, really.

The body has its own bodily needs and demands. But when you get really angry and lose control, well, that is the mind that is out of control. Whatever harm you may do with or through the physical body.

Linda: They're all images of relationship, as well, aren't they? The boat has to have somebody in control of it. The horse has to have somebody to ride it and a servant has to have a master.

S: Right. There's a sort of hierarchy of functions.

Dhammadinna: There has to be between those things a proper communication. (few words unclear) ... You're not just riding a horse as though that ...

(End of Side A)

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S: Or do you have a servant, as I saw in India, with some people, didn't know how to use a servant.

Marion: Does that mean that you don't identify too much with your ...

S: Yes, that's right. It's yours, it is not you. (Long Pause) Also, the text says, "thinking of the body as a servant, we should urge it on to good and wholesome deeds". This says, you should give the servant work to do - work which will benefit you, benefit the house. In the same way, you should give the body, so to speak, good deeds to do. Urge it to perform skilful actions - that's the right way to use it.

Debbie: It's like, not only mastering it but channelling it as well.

S: Yes, yes. Sometimes though, the body has a sort of will of its own, not to say a mind of its own. Have you ever felt that?

Voices: Yes.

S: Have you? I remember, I had a quite interesting experience once in this connection, partly in connection with the same person whose 'ghost' - in inverted commas - I saw, about whom I was just speaking. This was when he was still alive. He was a medical man, very keen on surgery. I had a Tibetan disciple who had a big sort of goitre on the side of the face and he wanted it removed. So this doctor who had been staying with me said, "We'll soon fix that!" So to cut a long story short, this Tibetan disciple of mine who was 40 - 45 years of age, was sort of laid out on the kitchen table and given a local anaesthetic and the doctor started hacking away with a razor blade. (Voices: Exclaiming in horror!) And he was cheerfully hacking away, (Monday until Tuesday) - I was holding the basin to catch the blood. So what happened was I felt my stomach heaving (Laughter) - mentally I was quite all right - I had no mental reaction. I thought, "Well that's funny. My stomach is taking a line of its own, as it were, it was quite impossible to control this. I said to the doctor, "Excuse me a moment", put down the bowl and went into the bathroom and I vomited and then I came straight back and held the bowl again. But it was quite interesting to see how the stomach, you know, or whatever had absolutely a mind of its own, was quite independent of conscious control. So I found it quite interesting. I'd never experienced anything quite like that before.

Rosie Anderson: How was the Tibetan disciple?

S: Tibetans are very imperturbable. He was fully conscious of course. He couldn't feel any pain and was following the proceeding with great [157] interest! (Laughter) He could have a look at this goitre I was holding, in his hand, then he took it away with him. Tibetans are very tough sort of people. He didn't turn a hair! (Laughter)

I didn't, but my stomach did! (Laughter) It was as though, it just had an independent life of its own, a mind of its own, a reaction of its own independently of my own conscious mental attitude. Has anyone else had any experiences like that?

Voices: Yes - (inaudible mumbles) ...

Paula: You don't actually know that you've eaten something that's going to disagree with your stomach so you're not planning for your stomach to ...

S: Your stomach knows! The stomach might be insisting on throwing it up, and you're trying to keep it down. You're misunderstanding the stomach. (Laughter)

Dawn: Yes. You notice sometimes - when we were veterinary nurses, when we looked at the list of operations for the day, particular nurses who didn't like some bone instruments being used would look at the list and see that they'd have to watch bone instruments, and they would have a physical reaction even though they were there and it was their work. And I personally didn't like anything to do with eyes. I used to notice that my stomach used to tell me first. (S: How interesting!) (Laughter)

S: It's quite extraordinary, these involuntary physical reactions! A lot of people react to blood in that sort of way, don't they? It's a very basic, a very primitive sort of ...

Vajrasuri: It makes you wonder how it operates; how it comes about? How the sense, whatever sense - how the body senses things.

S: Yes. I think in my case, it was just the blood, which was running pretty freely. I think it was just that.

Vajrasuri: Perhaps a body responds to another body's stress.

S: Yes, yes.

Vajrasuri: Like the body itself, really knows!

S: Yes. Well, haven't they done experiments with - there was this book 'The Secret Life of Plants', came out some years ago ... Weren't there experiments measuring the reactions of plants to the destruction of other living things in their vicinity? (Voices: Yes) And the plants registered it. It is as though all organic life is sensitive to other organic life. When cells are sort of being cut and torn like [158] like that, it's as though your own cells almost vibrate in sympathy. It's a reaction.

Voice: It can happen between people quite often. And people seem to have, especially if you're close to them, symptoms ...

S: Symptoms as distinct from the actual illness ...

Marion: I had something similar to that when I went to the Tibetan exhibition and saw the skull cups and human bones and I suddenly felt my mouth go dry and I had to keep drinking cups of tea ... every half an hour. (Laughter)

S: A lot of people have a very strong reaction to bones, don't they? The idea even of skull cups makes their flesh creep.

Marion: I used to like the idea of Dakinis, but I'm not sure now! (Laughter)

S: Well, you'll just have to hold another instrument - a chopper or something (Laughter). Or maybe something more lady-like, like a lotus flower or something. Dakinis are not ladies, you understand. (Laughter) So it's not so easy to use the body like a servant. It doesn't always obey you, does it? May be in some cases, it doesn't matter - in the case of these involuntary reactions. Perhaps it isn't necessary that (inaudible few words).

Linda: I suppose the body can't always obey you, can it, because otherwise, you'd never get sick unless - you ...

S: Unless you sort of consciously decided to allow your body to be sick. But then the result might be that instead of falling sickness as usually happens, well, the body would just die. The sickness

would have been the warning symptom. So you know, better not to try to do for the body, what it is more than capable of doing for itself. And in some ways, it's fortunate that certain processes, certain bodily processes have become autonomous. You don't have to think about it. But if you had to think consciously and regulate your circulatory system and your respiratory system, you wouldn't have time to think about anything else. They do carry on by themselves, regulate themselves. (Pause) Maybe that's all a rather odd speculation, anyway ... Let's go on with the next bit ...

Linda: "He who does so must have confidence, without which positive qualities do not grow in our continuously changing stream of life. This is affirmed in the 'Dasadharmakasutra':
Positive qualities do not grow
In men without confidence, [159]
Just as a green sprout
Does not shoot from a burnt seed."

S: Yes. "Positive qualities do not grow in men without confidence, just as a green sprout does not shoot from a burnt seed." I think Guenther translates as confidence, what is usually translated as 'Sraddha' - the Sanskrit word meaning, 'faith' - the Sanskrit word being 'Sraddha' ... We're going to be dealing with Sraddha in a minute.

Linda: It's very strong, isn't it?

S: It is, yes. What do you think is meant by 'positive qualities'? (Pause) Virtues. They don't grow in people who have no confidence, no faith. "Just as a green sprout does not shoot from a burnt seed".

Let's go on, because we'll need to study exactly what faith is.

Dawn: "And in the 'Buddhavatamsaka':
Worldly people with little confidence
Are unable to understand the Buddha's enlightenment."

S: All right, yes. Let's carry on. We'll go into this brief account of confidence.

Dawn: "Therefore confidence has to be awakened, as is stated in the 'Lalitavistara':

Ananda, you must use confidence. That is the request of the Tathagata ... It is of three kinds: trusting, longing, and lucid."

S: Hmm. Let's see what the note says: (Long Pause - mechanical noise) So faith is of "three kinds: the trusting, the longing and the lucid". Let's see what these three mean. Would someone like to read that paragraph?

Kay: " 'Trusting confidence' originates in the inevitable relation between Karma and its results, in the Truths of misery and its origination. It is the conviction that as a result of good and wholesome deeds, the pleasures, and of evil deeds the misery, of the world of sensuality arises, while through subliminal activity the pleasures of the two worlds, higher than that of sensuality emerge; it is the conviction that the five constituents of sullied individual existence, called the Truth of Misery, are obtained by having lived a life ruled by Karma and conflicting emotions, which two factors are called the Truth of the Origination of Misery."

S: There's another definition of trusting confidence which is given in the notes - note 32 - which says that: "Trusting confidence is to feel assurance deep in one's heart after having learned about the [160] unusual qualities and sustaining power of the precious Three Jewels. When, after

having learned that in all times and under all circumstances the precious Three Jewels are an unfailing help, the feeling of certitude which comes from conscience ("confidence of a mind that knows you") without hoping or aspiring for anything else except being aware of the Three Jewels as an unfailing help, whether you feel happy or sad, whether you are ill or are feverish, dying or alive, and whatever work you may have to do, this is trusting confidence."

In a way, the second one is clearer, isn't it? Let's try to look at this 'trusting confidence' in a little bit more detail, in the light of that second definition. Do you see how it proceeds?

That first of all you are aware of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You become aware of their very positive qualities. Do you see what I mean? You're attracted by those qualities; you're pleased by those qualities; you appreciate those qualities; you respond to those qualities. As a result of that; as a result of your prolonged contact with the Three Jewels; as a result of your continued contact after you start to put the Dharma into practice, you actually find that the Three Jewels, so to speak, work! So you start having trust in the Three Jewels. You can depend upon the Three Jewels and in that way, your trusting confidence, your trusting faith develops.

So there seem to be two stages here, according to this definition or two main stages: First of all, when you appreciate the positive qualities of the Three Jewels and respond to them; and then you find that you actually can depend upon the Three Jewels - that the Three Jewels work as it were - that the Dharma especially perhaps works.

But the first definition, in the text itself, that seems to, as it were, miss out this more devotional starting point of trusting faith. Do you see what I mean? Here, it's sort of confidence in the inevitable relation between Karma and its results - if you have that trusting faith that the skilful actions you perform will bring about fruit in the form of happiness and vice versa.

Voice: That's like the second definition.

S: Yes, right So the second definition of this trusting confidence, given in the notes, seems a bit more complete or a bit more understandable, doesn't it? In a way, a bit more reasonable. It seems much more likely that that is the sort of way in which it happens - the sort of way in which trust and faith comes about.

Debbie: I like it when it says: "And when your mind does not harbour doubts, whatever you think of will come true."

S: Yes, yes. (Pause)

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Dawn: Especially whether you feel happy or sad, faith seems to be happy when you're happy ...

S: Yes, yes. The essence of the matter seems to be contained in these words about the "unusual qualities and sustaining power of the Precious Three Jewels". First you appreciate the unusual qualities and then you experience the sustaining power. In what way, in what sort of way, is one sustained by the Three Jewels? In what sort of way are the Three Jewels an unfailing help?

Debbie: Because if you put them into practice, they really do work.

S: Yes, they really do work. So can you see that a little bit more in detail? How would your, say, trusting faith in the Buddha be confirmed? How would you experience that?

Dhammadinna: Experience yourself becoming more like that as you put the Dharma into practice.

S: Ah, yes, yes! So you have more trusting faith in the fact that the Buddha must have been like that because by following the Buddha's teaching, that's how I've become. Just as the Buddha said I would. So the Buddha really must have been like that! To have been able to give that sort of teaching, so your trusting faith, in the Buddha specifically deepens. And then your trusting faith in the Dharma, how do you experience the sustaining power of the Dharma?

Debbie: Because you can feel it working, you can feel it's changing you.

S: Yes, yes. I mean for instance, when you practice the metta bhavana, you can actually experience your negative emotions, especially your anger and hatred being dissolved. You can see how it makes it more easy for you to relate to other people. And what about the Sangha? The sustaining power of the Sangha, how do you experience that? How do you experience the Sangha as unfailing help? That's pretty obvious, isn't it? When you really get some really good advice from your spiritual friend or when you really do experience that people really do stand by you in time of difficulties, you then do experience the sustaining power of the Sangha.

So first of all there seems to come appreciation of the positive qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Here you admire very much, you're fascinated, you feel very grateful in your faith and devotion, but then as result of that, you try to put the Three Jewels, so to speak, in to operation in your own life. And you find that you can do that. You find that you can rely on the Three Jewels. You find that you start developing confidence in 'they do work'. In that [162] way you develop the trusting confidence, the trusting faith.

Dhammadinna: Is it like those two intermediate pujas where with worship you appreciate - with salutation you decide to do it.

Vajrasuri: The bit that I like is 'whether you feel happy or sad', 'whether you're dying or alive' ... (Laughter)

S: Yes. 'Whatever work you may have to do, this is trusting confidence'.

Vajrasuri: What does it mean? Just up a bit - the fifth line where it says: "confidence of a mind that knows you".

Megha: That's a good one!

S: Yes, they give the Tibetan of that also. Let's see the context: "When, after having learned that in all times and under all circumstances, the precious Three Jewels are an unfailing help, the feeling of certitude which comes from conscience 'confidence of the mind that knows you', without hoping or aspiring for anything else except etc." So Guenther seems to use the word 'conscience' to translate this Tibetan expression which literally means 'confidence of a mind that knows you'. Hm? It's not clear whether it's confidence of a mind that knows you in the sense of your own self or in the sense of the confidence of a mind that knows, say, its object, in this case the Three Jewels. That doesn't seem very clear. But anyway, what is in question is a feeling of certitude - a feeling of certitude about the Three Jewels. You can rely upon them, you can depend upon them, they do work. They are not only beautiful but useful.

In this life you may say, your initial appreciation of a person - you may say, you feel drawn to him to begin with, by their appearance, by their beauty or their charm. You may appreciate that very much. You may feel a strong affection for them or something like that. But then as you get to know them better, you start learning you start realizing that they're very reliable, dependable; they'll stand by you, they'll help you. So in this way, you build up a trusting confidence in them, huh? Just the same with the Three Jewels. There is the initial attraction based on appreciation of the beauty of the spiritual qualities, the positive qualities of the Three Jewels. As a result of that

you start, so to speak, putting the Three Jewels into practice, and then you learn that you really can depend upon them.

You could even say there are three stages: admiring the Three Jewels, emulating the Three Jewels and learning that you can trust the Three Jewels.

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Debbie: It would be really amazing, like, when more people come along to the centre could only put the meditation into practice more, so that their kind of faith will arise. It's like they don't give themselves enough time to do that.

S: Yes. They don't give themselves enough time to convince themselves that it really does work. (Pause)

Vajrasuri: Admiring, emulating and trusting - do you see them as in the sequence ... like first admiring (S: Yes) - the stages that you go through, if you were to admire the principle and the (typical) value ...

S: It would seem from this definition in the note that it would seem to be a natural sequence, in a way.

Linda: Because it could take different lengths of time - how sort of fast you move from one to the other would depend on you and your own experience. (S: Yes) It could considerably vary from person to person. Some people taking quite a long time and some people being very quick.

Annie F: It's also a deepening process.

S: Indeed, yes. In a sense, there's no end to it, until you're Enlightened. (Pause)

Anjali: Bhante, why does one's mind harbour doubts?

S: Well, to begin with, what exactly does one mean by 'doubts'? I mean, doubts about what? Why does one doubt anything? Why doesn't one just believe whatever ideas one is taught, like a small child? How does a child learn to doubt? A child does not naturally doubt. Does it? Those with children please speak up.

Voice: From being betrayed.

S: Ah! For instance, it did occur to me once - I spoke about this once or twice - that to the child, to tell the truth is natural. Yeah? If you ask a child, what did you do? Who did you see? The child would just tell you. A child doesn't have to learn to speak the truth. Judging from what some educationalists, or judging at least, from what some moralists say, you have to teach the child to speak the truth. As far as I've observed, you don't have to teach children to speak the truth, what you have to teach them to do is how to tell lies. Yeah? As when you let the child answer the door when the bell rings, and you tell the child, "If any body asks if mummy's at home, say, she's not at home! She's gone out." I mean in this way you instruct the child. Otherwise, the child's natural tendency is to burst out: "No, she's [164] here, yes. Come in!" (Laughter) You see. So I think it's the same with faith, also. I think a child's most natural tendency is to believe what it is told, so how does it learn not to believe what it is told? Only by painful experience. I think a child sometimes gets very very (down) as when it says, "Oh mummy, you said you would give me jam for tea today!" Yeah? You see what I mean? And it learns, you see, that people, that grownups, they do tell lies. They don't keep their word. And he gets very disillusioned and it starts learning these things itself. And then of course, you start thinking of the child being wicked and not being moral and needing to be taught morality, etc. etc. Whereas in a way, it's got a natural tendency, at

least to a certain extent or up to a point. Or am I being a little bit too idealistic? And having not seen enough children at first quarters. Do you think this is so? (Voices: Yes!)

Greta: The children's time span's often very different to that of the adult. When the adult said, "I'm coming now, I'll do it now." They're expecting the now ... and they begin to doubt, is it going to happen?

S: Yes, anyway. How does that connect with doubt? So, how do we develop doubts? What are doubts? I mean, does a child have doubts? What significance does doubt have in connection with children? What is a doubt? Isn't a doubt a sort of uncertainty?

Rosie Anderson: A lack of confidence in something, isn't it?

S: A lack of confidence due to a lack of clear knowledge.

Rosie A: It can be quite fearful, too.

Dhammadinna: Though it would start with the concrete things, wouldn't it? But you could end up with more emotional, psychological doubts.

S: Yes, yes. Abstract or social doubts.

(Tea Break)

S: We've discussed this sort of question of whether you can be reborn in the past in terms of whether the time flow is irreversible. Because time flows in only one direction, so to speak, from past to present to future. Would it be possible to reverse this? (The time flow up) as you reverse a film, for instance and play it backwards. Would that be possible? But on the other hand, you might say, "well how do we know that time is going forward now?" Is that not a point of view? Whether you call it going forward or going back, it's the same, isn't it? So even when you go back into time, well, you're still going forward. (Laughter) Because what you have described as [165] past, you're going into. You see what I mean? Just as when you reverse the film, there is a progression, as it were, back into the so-called past, So there is sort of sequence - you can call it, going from the present into the future or from the present into the past, as you please. So actually the question is an artificial question.

Annie F: It's a cultural thing anyway, Bhante! Aren't there tribes that don't have any sense of the linear progression of time? They just live in the present. I think there are some South American Indian tribes that are like that. They don't have a concept of time, as we know it.

S: Maybe they don't have an abstract concept of time, but surely they are conscious of the progression of time. For instance, supposing, say, one of them - say, supposing a male of the tribesmen was waiting for the tribeswoman to turn up under the palm tree and she didn't turn up and he was waiting and waiting. Would he not be conscious of the progression of time? Even if he didn't have an abstract term for time itself. The experience would be there, wouldn't it?

Annie F: I'm not sure but I think they did have - didn't have verbs or tenses to denote the passage of time. They didn't seem to have memory of time.

S: Well, I'd be inclined to doubt that because could one live?

Greta: Because the very idea of day and night, that's in ...

S: It could be that their language is not so highly abstract or conceptual, that is quite possible.

Though they must for instance, have some way of telling time, so they would know how long it would take to build a boat or a house, or something like that. They must have some idea of whether it would take one week to build a boat and (sailing there) would take two and a half days. Some such concept surely, otherwise they could hardly live. Or a concept of how long it would take to cover a certain distance.

Do animals have any conception of time?

Vajrasuri: They seem to. They seem to arrive an hour before they're due to have their dinner (Laughter), they do have some time concept. Also with cats, dogs, I've noticed it ... Is there an aspect of Karma, where skilful acts or skilful deeds, in this time can nullify unskilful deeds, in the past?

S: Nullify the consequences? (Vajrasuri: Yes)

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S: Oh, yes! There is a particular category or function of Karma, which is called - 'counter-active', counter-active Karma. That is why, supposing you have performed various unskilful actions, and if you realize they are unskilful, well, you can perform skilful actions which will counteract the effect of those unskilful actions, so that you will not experience those effects, those fruits.

Vajrasuri: I've noticed that happening and I wondered if that was an aspect of some sort of transformation of time, because it does happen a bit, in the future.

S: Because how does it work, so to speak?

Vajrasuri: Yes. It does seem to shift things. It sheds a different light on things that actually have happened, back in time.

S: It's as though you sort of altered them retrospectively. (VS: Yes) I don't think it's really like that, because you're adding another factor to a total situation in such a way, that the ultimate end result of the whole situation is multiplied. You see what I mean? I'll just give an example: supposing you got a bowl of water and you put into it, say, some blue dye. Well, then after a while you can modify that - you can drop some yellow dye in and that will make the water green. So in the same way, in your stream of consciousness, you could have some, well, let's say your unskilful actions that coloured the stream of your consciousness 'blue' - so it goes on flowing blue and the result will be that you will continue to experience blue, i.e. something painful. But you 'drop in', as it were, some good actions, which are yellow and that yellow colour modifies the blue colour. So that, instead of experiencing blue, after some time you experience green, i.e. happiness. You see what I mean? Maybe, it's a bit like that. The analogy isn't completely correct, because you need really to have another colour which you experience after the blue. You see what I mean? Corresponding to the consequence of blue - the unskilful actions.

Debbie: Don't the Yogacara School have a philosophy about the Alaya consciousness and about seeds being stored there until they ...?

S: That's true! Until such time as they can fructify. In fact, one shouldn't think so much in terms of separate Karmas as though they're separate things. There's a total process going on which is you - which is your actions of body, speech and mind, which have a certain ethical quality - either more or less skilful or more or less unskilful. And a certain result, a certain experience, a certain fruit is accruing to you all the time, in consequence of this ongoing process, but you can [167] modify that process at any time, at any point, in such a way, that the net result of the whole process is also modified.

Linda: Can you have an effect on other people's Karma? Like I've heard consciously - like your parents giving birth to you and your being someone who is going towards enlightenment, that's giving your parents - have I misinterpreted or ...?

S: Well, what does one mean by 'modifying somebody else's Karma'? If their Karma is their volition or action? Can you modify directly? It would seem that you can't. but you may provide them with objects of their own volition. (Dhammadinna: It helps them to change) You can encourage them, but you cannot, as it were, exercise their volitions for them, by the very nature of volition. You can induce an influence but the Karmic responsibility, the volition is still theirs.

Annie M: Bhante, what is meant by the expression - I don't know where it is,- I think it's in a text of the Tibetans - of 'Karma-burning'?

S: I can't say that I've heard of that. It could be counter-acting 'burning-up' so to speak. Not the Karmas themselves, but their untoward consequences with the help of corresponding skilful actions.

Rosie Ong: I heard what Linda was saying, as well -I think it's - your parents bring you up and it's good Karma in doing that and when you grow up, you perform skilful actions, then the effects of the Karma from bringing you up is better because you're a better being. Does it work backwards like that? If you bring up somebody who turns out to be a criminal and if you bring up somebody who turns out to be enlightened, the Karma, will it be different? (V: the parents' Karma)

S: Well, it would depend entirely on your intentions. If you intended to bring up a criminal, well, yes, it would mean a painful Karmic consequence, but for instance, if you did your best to bring your child up properly, well you ...

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S: ... a child turns out badly. If you genuinely and sincerely acted as a responsible parent and done your best, well, the results of that would be pleasant, rather than painful, because that would have been a good karma. Even if the child that you'd brought up did not take advantage of that, but turned it, you know, in an unskilful way, they would then bear the results of their unskilful actions, but you wouldn't because you had done your best; you had performed skilful actions in relation to your child. So the parents are not responsible for the sins of the children, unless they've deliberately contributed to them, you know, by bringing them up in the wrong way. If you trained your child, for instance, to torment dogs and cats and then later on they killed a human being, perhaps you would be partially responsible morally and karmically.

Rosie Ong: Is it only weighty karma that can not be nullified?

S: Weighty karma cannot be nullified, yes.

Rosie O: Is it the only classification that (can be looked at) statically?

S: It is as though the weighty karma modifies your sort of stream of consciousness to a very radical extent. Not immediately, not the (wider) ... in the long run, yes, because otherwise how could someone like Angulimala ever gain Enlightenment. But even after gaining Enlightenment, he had to suffer the results of his previous heavy unskilful actions, after he'd murdered so many people. So even after he became an Arhant, well, he was attacked and beaten by people as a result.

Debbie: What about Milarepa? He performed an incredible amount of unskilful actions, didn't

he? (S: Yes.) He still had to suffer the consequences of that, didn't he?

S: If he had been reborn, yes. (Debbie: Ah, yes) You don't, if you've committed weighty wholesome or unwholesome karma, - you have to experience that if not in this life, certainly in the next one and that takes precedence over any other karmas. But supposing you gained Enlightenment in this life, then you escape, and this is what Milarepa said - that he realized that he'd committed so many unskilful karmas of such a heavy nature, that [169] if he didn't gain Enlightenment in this life, thereby transcending karma completely, then he would surely be reborn in hell. And that gave him a sort of incentive. You see what I mean? (Laughter)

Rosie Anderson: But again Angulimala experienced the karmic consequences of his actions in the present life, after ...

S: Well, he experienced them to some extent because he wasn't actually killed. He was only attacked and wounded. But if he had died, and been reborn, he would have been reborn as a result of taking other people's life, he would have been reborn, according to traditional Buddhist teaching, in a body that would not have lived very long and that would have, you know, suffered very much even during that short span.

Rosie A: Even though he was Enlightened?

S: No, no. If he'd been reborn without gaining Enlightenment, yes, but having gained Enlightenment, well he sort of, in a way, went free. So it's not a Buddhist teaching that all karmas must produce consequences. Well, in a sense, they must, but supposing you, in a manner of speaking, were not there to receive those consequences. (Laughter) You've subtracted yourself from the karmic and samsaric process. You're beyond karma in a manner of speaking.

Debbie: What about - I mean, this is something that somehow confuses me - what about abortions? Would that really be weighty karma?

S: Well, if one considers abortion as deliberate taking of human life, then it would be regarded as weighty karma according to the Abhidharma. (Pause)

Dhammadinna: There is also the karma of the being that is being aborted - that must be somehow their karma.

S: That may well be, yes. But the fact that it's somebody else's karma, that's been injured by you, doesn't mean that you are not responsible for the karma of committing injury.

Annie Murphy: But as you said the other day, Bhante, it's modified by the amount of intelligence or volition and what you [170] actually know yourself to be doing, at the time.

S: Yes, yes. Also the spiritual status of the person in relation to whom you've committed the action. And you might argue that, a human foetus or a human embryo is considerably less developed than an adult and that therefore, though it was an unskilful action, it was less unskilful. You could simply argue in that way. I'm not so sure that that would be correct but you could perhaps ...

Annie Murphy: Practically speaking, that means if you abort a child at 3 months, it's quite different to actually bearing it and then murdering it, by exposing it or whatever ...

S: Well, is it different, one might say? Because, let's face it, it's quite an interesting question - at least a legal question if not an ethical one - supposing, let's say, a child is prematurely born - let's say it's born when it's only 6 months old. And supposing if it had been aborted at, let's say, 6¹¹

months, then that would have been acceptable to, let's say, society that an abortion had been committed. But supposing instead of living to be 6^{1/2} months old, it was born prematurely, then if, when it was alive and out of the womb at 6^{1/2} months or seven months, you had killed it, you would have been held guilty of murder. So is there a real, can you really draw that sort of ethical distinction? See what I mean? Is it ethical in the one case and unethical in the other?

Jenny: It depends on when you consider that life starts. Is it at conception or at birth?

S: Well again, that depends on what you mean by life. If you mean, say, capacity to survive independently then the child in the womb is not alive. But then what about the child who is only three months old. It can't survive apart from its mother, or apart from some human being or some independent care. So Would it be, you know, ethically acceptable to murder it then? (Pause) So it's not such a (interrupted) ... Pardon?

Voice: With progression of technological science (unclear) so I suppose it legally would have to change.

S: So the destruction of a living being that could survive independently, would be regarded as killing, because in as much as it [171] wouldn't be regarded as a part of a larger entity. So it's in a way, quite a complex matter.

Dhammadinna: They've been having a big legal discussion in the States about where life starts, according to who and so on, about the abortion laws.

S: And what is life? (How does one define it)?

I think that one can say that the more alive something is, you know, the more you have to go against your sort of innate sympathy for life, or with life, in order to take that life. For instance, most people would not feel at all unhappy about plucking a flower. You don't destroy the plant. You see what I mean? The plant goes on living even though the flower has been plucked. But someone might also feel quite happy about uprooting a plant they don't feel that as killing. Somebody else again might not bother much about killing an ant or a slug, whereas another person might have a degree of sympathy with living things such that he or she couldn't do that. So in that way, you go up the scale. You see - with the more highly organized the form of life, I think, the more difficult it is for you to bring yourself to kill it or to take that life; depending also on your own degree of sensitivity. So, until you come to the point that where even a man who could perhaps kill a dog or a fox or certainly a rat, couldn't bring himself to kill another human being except under very exceptional circumstances. (Pause)

Kay: But even a being that had got itself into the womb, if it was aborted, presumably it would have another chance of gaining human life, afterwards.

S: Well, yes, presumably. But that would also be the case in the case of an adult that you had killed.

Dhammadinna: ... It's a bit of an unethical argument to say, "Well, it can have another chance, I suppose".

S: In that case, you could kill anybody.

Annie Murphy: Yes. No, it's only interesting in connection with, I'm sorry, with limbo and things like that to do with Catholicism and the state of suspended, you know - that you just couldn't get [172] out or you'd be in hell for the rest of your time.

S: Well, if you were in a state of being unbaptized, - limbo is for unbaptized infants.

Annie M: Right, it's not hell but it's certainly not heaven.

S: It's certainly not heaven or even purgatory. (Pause) I don't think it's very easy to sort of resolve any of these issues in a sort of legalistic way. I think it is essentially a question of, as it were, cultivating your own sensitivity to life and you know, just acting in accordance with that. And if you actually do feel that you're killing something, well, just refrain from it.

Dhammadinna: The abortion question seems to be polarized between the Christian viewpoint which is that all life is sacred because it's created by God and the very secular viewpoint of the extreme feminists who say, "what's in my womb is mine", and the Buddhist viewpoint is different again from that.

S: It's a gradation of life, the gradation of skilfulness or unskilfulness.

Dhammadinna: But also the fact that it's not just yours because it's in your womb. You believe in a continuity.

S: Right, yes. You do not belong to yourself.

Dhammadinna: You don't have an absolute right to do with it as you see fit.

S: Also the Catholic position is inconsistent in as much as, it has been pointed out that they're dead against abortion, but they believe as Catholic leaders have been explaining recently, that they believe in the possibility of a 'just war'. You see what I mean? (Laughter) They believe it is possible to take human life without breaking the commandments. So why all this fuss about abortions when they condone mass slaughter in war?

Dhammadinna: Yes, but that's like, fighting against non-Catholics. Abortion's against potential Catholics. There's a vested interest somewhere. (Laughter) ... hypocrisy.

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Rosie Ong: What about giving babies away in adoption, in it's degree of skilfulness or unskilfulness?

S: Well, it might be a skilful thing to do because if you feel that you are not in a position to bring up your child in a skilful or positive manner, well, then it would be better to hand it over to people who can do that. Maybe we shouldn't have talked about subjects ... (Voices: Debbie brought it up.)

Dhammadinna: Debbie brought it up because she has interest ...

S: But I would say that in many cases, especially say, if the mother is mentally sub-normal or ethically not very responsible, well, it certainly would be better to hand the child over to maybe caring people who haven't been able to have a child of their own and really want a child and would give it a much better start in life.

Greta: I do a lot of that work and it's really a joy to see people taking a child in, who haven't been able to have one of their own, knowing that they want to do their best for it.

Kay: It still seems to do that child a lot of harm though. Even when an adult, knowing that they've been given away.

S: Ah, yes. But there has been something written about this recently, I think, in one of the Sunday papers, in connection with whether, say, a local authority has got the right, as it were, in perpetuity, to keep from that person the identity of his real biological parents. It is said that some adopted children are very, very anxious to know who their real parents were.

Greta: The law has been changed. (S: Has it?) Yes, they can at 18, well, you tell them as early as you ... but certainly at 18 they can go and get all the information. It is legal that you must actually prepare as much evidence so that you can give it to them. And also the consequences of not finding an alternative home as the law stands, means that hundreds of children would normally grow up in institutions. So, it's working out, which is preferable.

S: Yes, yes right.

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Dhammadinna: There was a program on TV in New Zealand about adoption and I think they're also trying to change their confidentiality laws and there are both sides of the story. Some parents obviously don't want the knock on the door from a child they've had adopted years and years ago. But they also interviewed some Maoris on a (Marrai) and it was interesting to contrast their different approach to adoption in that they have public adoptions. Everybody knows and because they're in that kind of tribal community, if a family's got too many children or for some reason they don't actually want a child, then there is a public adoption. Everybody knows who the previous parents were, who the adoptive parents were. And it struck me a lot of the secrecy about adoption comes from guilt feelings and maybe even Christian attitudes to all sorts of things.

S: Also maybe in some cases the adoptive parents want you to feel this is my child and almost pretend that they've sort of given birth to it almost.

Dhammadinna: There's a possessive attitude, as well perhaps as a child being illegitimate ...

S: I noticed in India, though they don't call it 'adoption', very often if a lot of children in one family or if a particular parent's got a lot of children, well one of them may sort of go and live with maybe cousins who haven't got any children even when the child is quite small, it may be taken away. Well, then it's just generally known - it's just that 'my third son is living with his auntie so and so'. And for all intents and purposes, they're his parents. He may even call them mother and father, although he knows who his, so to speak, real parents actually are.

Rosie Anderson: That happens a lot in Scotland actually; lots of my friends were actually brought up by their grandparents or aunts and their other brothers and sisters just stayed at home.

S: Maybe we make it too complicated with legalities and trying to pin it all down and all that sort of thing.

Dawn: When my mum told me I was adopted, I wasn't surprised. I was about four and it didn't surprise me at all and when I was quite young, I used to think this is really quite interesting to [175] know who my parents are but now I don't mind in a way. I don't really think about it.

Voice: ... seems to be a new problem springing up in our culture and that's to do with artificial insemination.

S: Yes, yes, an anonymous donor, yes, right.

Same Voice: I was reading an article and I realized I'd be quite upset if I found out ... I would never be able to find out who my father was because the sperm is given in confidence.

S: Nobody knows the source. There's no record of the source. The donor is given a number.

Dhammadinna: That would lead to all sorts of weird things going on, incest and so ...

S: Well they are a bit worried about that - but I don't think from a purely biological point of view, there's much to worry about as regards incest.

Voice: Just from an emotional (viewpoint)

S: Yes, yes. Anyway, how did we get on to all that?

Voices: (Laughter - making words indistinct)

S: It does seem when one gets into this sort of area, it does seem quite an emotive sort of subject. Sometimes one wonders how far to go and when to stop exactly. (Pause)

Anyway, what is the next kind of faith? Someone like to read that?

Annie Murphy: "Longing confidence means that having recognized enlightenment to be something particularly valuable, we study the path for its attainment with eagerness."

S: So why is longing confidence called 'longing confidence'? What exactly are you longing for here? (Voices: Enlightenment) Enlightenment, itself, yes. So, in a way, this is an aspect of the previous kind of confidence, previous kind of faith, as explained in the note - not in the text itself.

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Because it's as though, first of all, you appreciate the positive qualities of the Three Jewels and you develop a positive attitude towards those qualities and then you have this sort of longing to be like that yourself. And it's because of that that you start, as it were, putting the Three Jewels into practice.

Rosie Ong: It's sometimes difficult to know the distinction between faith - they say it's natural to have faith - and gullibility.

S: Ah! Well, could you speak of a child as being gullible? Really?

Voice: No.

S: No. It seems inappropriate, doesn't it? But when you speak of an adult as being gullible, what do you really mean? He believes everything or she believes everything just like a child, whereas the fact that he or she is an adult, should mean that they've had enough experience of the world to know that you can't, unfortunately, believe everything that everybody says.

Linda: But faith in this sense isn't something external, is it? It's something like a deepening experience growing within you. So it's not really a kind of gullibility because it's, you know, your own inner confidence. It's not outside there that you have doubts about.

Paula: I was just thinking that children don't seem gullible, because they do have a very clear understanding of emotional ...

S: They know the truth, they know when a person is sincere or not. But like with adults, gullibility is almost an insensitivity.

Voice: (Indistinct)

S: In other words, you ought to be able to tell when someone is telling lies, really, and children I think have that capacity, once they've become aware that there is such a thing as a lie. Even if they don't have any idea of a lie they can tell if you're not speaking the truth - if you're not telling them the truth, or what you believe is the truth. They can tell that something is wrong.

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Rosie Ong: Faith is almost like that definition - is trusting your instincts, if you like - not your instincts but your inner feelings.

S: This kind of faith is not quite like that. It's as though you admire the positive qualities of the Three Jewels so much that you would like to be like that yourself. You long to be like that yourself. This is 'longing faith' and it's because of that that you put the Three Jewels, as it were, into practice. And the result of that practice is you learn that the Three Jewels can be trusted. In that way your trusting confidence or faith comes into existence. So it's as though with the help of this second kind of faith - it's as though we've interpolated a third stage or a fourth stage even, into the three that we had before. Do you see what I mean?

First of all, there was faith in the sense of admiration and appreciation of the positive qualities of the Three Jewels; now we've got the longing to be like them, and then coming back to the previous definition, we've got putting into practice the Three Jewels as it were, and then fourthly there's, as a result of that putting into practice the Three Jewels - experiencing that one can actually trust the Three Jewels. So one has got first of all: Appreciation; then one has got aspiration, let us say, then you've got emulation, and then you've got, what did we say the fourth one was? (Voice: Trusting) Yes, but what could a similar word for that be? Confirmation, you could say. So you've got admiration or appreciation - you've got aspiration in the sense of the desire to emulate; then you've got emulation and then you've got confirmation - faith in a fuller sense involves all these things. We're going to come to a third kind of faith.

Dhammadinna: Before you started - appreciation, you've just discriminated as to what's skilled or unskilled - discrimination first. Well, if you're talking about gullibility and that kind of - well, it's not faith. You're not actually discriminating, you're just accepting everything that comes at you.

S: But perhaps one might say in the case of your appreciation of the Three Jewels, that you've not consciously discriminated between what is skilful and what is unskilful. Because if you define, say, a human being as an essentially spiritual being, you may have a natural appreciation for the Three Jewels without ever having heard anything about them or learnt anything about them or knowing [178] theoretically the difference between skilful and unskilful. As soon as we come into contact with the Three Jewels, we spontaneously appreciate them without even knowing what they are perhaps, and then there's the spontaneous aspiration: I would really like to be like that. That longing faith.

Dhammadinna: You're still making a value judgement - I'm just trying to point out a distinction between following your instincts and faith in a more positive sense - making a positive value, at least emotionally. If you respond like that, you are not just being gullible.

S: Oh, no, the word 'gullible' is not applicable. You're developing faith or experiencing faith or as Guenther says, 'confidence'. It's quite clear that there's movement from one stage to another, isn't it?

Annie Fowler: It's almost as if gullibility is actually an abdication of responsibility for what you could find out - for what you accept. You accept what somebody says without proving it.

S: (Unclear) ... gullibility sometimes is just a lack of intelligence.

Voice: Yes. Quite often it's laziness.

S: Yes. Well, if it isn't laziness. (Pause) Well, for instance, what about that famous First of April spoof. Do you remember that years and years ago?

Greta: The spaghetti farm. (Laughter)

S: Were the people who saw that program and accepted it, at its face value, were they being gullible? Or is it a borderline case?

Greta: I think it's borderline.

S: Yes, so we'll ... (Laughter) You can't expect people in Britain to know the details of the process of the manufacture of spaghetti.

Annie Murphy: I mean, there was a far more dangerous one than that, wasn't there, with Orson Welles telling New Yorkers that the [179] Martians had landed. It nearly had disastrous consequences. (S: Yes, that's right!)

Linda: What he was actually doing was reading H.G. Wells' "the War of the Worlds" - some people took it that - they believed it.

Annie M: I think he was being a bit naughty, quite honestly.

Linda: But the thing is, on both those cases it was on April the First, and the thing is that people first had to forget that it's April the First and April Fools' Day before they - I mean, I know that's April Fools' jokes but everybody knew it was the first of April.

S: Or should have known or should have remembered.

Linda: It's like it was popular or could have been.

Rosie A: Somebody rang me up on April first this year and asked to speak to Mr Monk (Laughter), I didn't get it "No I don't think there's anybody here by that name. What's it about?" (Laughter)

S: You should have said, "He isn't around but this is Mrs Monk." (Laughter) They wouldn't have known what to say, they would have (put down the receiver). (Laughter)

Voice: It is a kind of gullibility - people believe what they see on the television without actually questioning ...

S: It seems so, doesn't it? Well, there's the joke: "If you see it on the telly, it must be true!" If you see it on the telly, it must exist. So how different is faith? All right, let's go on to lucid confidence:

Rosie Ong: "'Lucid confidence' starts with the Three Jewels. It is a lucid mind interested in and eager for the Jewels of the Buddha as the teacher of the path, of the Dharma as being the path and of the Sangha as the spiritual friends helping to realize that path. Thus in the 'Abhidharma':

What is confidence? 'It is conviction about Karma, its results, the Truth and the Jewels; it is longing and a lucid mind.'

S: That quotation doesn't really help us very much. It simply [180] recapitulates and says, "it is longing and a lucid mind". So what is this lucid confidence? It "starts with the Three Jewels. It is a lucid mind interested in and eager for the Jewels of the Buddha as the teacher of the path, of the Dharma as being the path and of the Sangha as the spiritual friends helping to realize that path."

So how does this 'lucid confidence' differ from, say, 'trusting confidence'? Supposing you start off - let's go back to our four stages of confidence. You start off with appreciation, and then you go on to aspiration. So where does this lucid confidence come in? Perhaps the key words are 'interest in and eager for' - do you see what I mean? Instead of the sort of appreciation, there's a sort of interest. So what sort of difference of emphasis would that suggest?

Voice: It's formed from your own experience.

S: Yes, but even more than that.

Rosie A: That you're starting to articulate it somehow or actually bring it into being.

S: Yes. Well, couldn't one say it was more as it were, intellectual interest - eagerness. It's as though you're possessed to learn, to find out rather than just to sort of contemplate the beauty of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So it's as though this lucid mind, at this stage anyway, is a sort of more intellectual aspect of that positive appreciation. Because you're appreciating because you're drawn by the positive qualities of the Three Jewels, you want to find out more about them. Your interest is awakened. And then, when you become eager for them, that is when you want to try to gain them, as it were, to possess them, or if you like, to emulate them, to become like them. So it's as though it's this 'lucid confidence' corresponds to those first two stages that we've previously mentioned, but from a slightly more intellectual point of view. Do you see what I mean? It's not as though we've got three kinds of confidence here, it's more like different aspects of faith itself and one can think in terms of its gradual development, can think of it also - at least in the early stages - in more emotional or as it were 'intellectual' terms.

Rosie A: Does 'lucid' mean clear?

S: Clear, yes. [181] It's as though faith can either have a more aesthetic starting point or a more, as it were, intellectual starting point. Though maybe 'intellectual' isn't quite the right word for it. It's interest as distinct from appreciation.

Marion: It's like you're inquisitive.

S: Inquisitive, yes. You want to find out more: What is this Buddha? Who is he? What is the teaching? You don't just appreciate, you want to know more. It's investigative, as well as appreciative. So, it's not that really, despite the division of the text - not that you've got three clear cut categories of faith or confidence. They do sort of shade into one another. Each of the three can be sub-divided and some of the sub-divisions overlap.

Voice: Does it depend more on your temperament, which?

S: Possibly. The classification of say, (Saddha-musari?) - faith follower and then doctrine follower - maybe a faith-follower would be more likely simply to appreciate in an aesthetic sort of way. The doctrine-follower would be more investigative, more enquiring, more eager to know.

Vajrasuri: You wouldn't put a qualitative judgement on these forms of faith, would you? Say one is superior to the other? It's just ...

S: No, I think essentially there is just faith, with these stages of development and different

aspects. They're all interconnected. It's not a question of three quite distinct kinds, literally, you know, one of which may be better than or superior to the others. No. It isn't really like that at all. Also faith is something - not a static quality or virtue - it is something living that is growing all the time, developing all the time.

Anjali: Bhante, you know it says at note 34, (supposedly) originating lucid confidence. I can't understand it.

S: Ah, let's see what - "Lucid confidence is the birth of confidence after a clear mind has been led to the idea that (the sustaining power of) Compassion has not descended on us when we are deprived of such chances as visiting monasteries in which there are many worshipful objects representing the Body, Speech [182] and Mind of the Victorious One, or meeting face to face virtuous people who are spiritual teachers and friends, or hearing their qualities and life stories." There - what does that mean? (pause)

Well, lucid confidence is the confidence that understands that without visiting monasteries, etc., etc., compassion will not descend, compassion will not develop (Pause) In other words, 'lucid faith' is the faith which understands the conditions for the arousing of compassion. Even so it does seem a little involved or a little indirect, doesn't it? Anyway, this is a quotation from a Tibetan work.

Voice: Lucid confidence is dependent on admiration? Is it?

S: No. It seems to depend more on understanding of the particular factors, exercises, practices which are helpful for the development of compassion, or the sense of compassion, as the text says. And therefore, the understanding that without those things there will be no compassion. In other words, you see, you have the confidence, as it were, that if you do all these things; if you visit monasteries and worship objects representing the body, speech and mind of the Victorious one, then you will develop compassion. You have that confidence. That is 'lucid faith', 'lucid confidence'. It's a sort of understanding that if you do such and such, then such and such a result will come about.

Vajrasuri: He seems to be describing two different types of mind or approaches to the way of conceiving or experiencing.

S: Well, perhaps as I said, the approach of the (Saddha-musari?) the faith follower and the Dharma-(Musari) or doctrine-follower: the devotee and the 'Gnostic', let us say.

Marion: It seems that faith in Buddhism demands action. If you're passive, you don't really have faith.

S: Yes, also it's clear that faith in Buddhism has nothing to do with belief. It does not consist in believing in the truth of certain propositions, let us say, which cannot be demonstrated.

For instance, to take an extreme example - in Catholicism, you have faith in such things as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of the Body and so on and so forth - things which cannot [183] possibly be verified or made objects of experience.

Voice: It's more like gullibility.

S: You could say that, yes. (Laughter)

Rosie Ong: I'm not very clear in my mind - what's the difference between faith and dependence?

S: Well, what is dependence?

Rosie O: Non-attachment. Thinking that everything doesn't last. You can't go to anything for Refuge. A kind of Hinayana attitude if you like, that all you want to do is try to get away so you won't want to be attached to anything. You can't depend on anybody because they are not dependable.

S: Yes. It's the Hinayana view - it's even the Mahayana view in a way - that you should not depend upon those things which are not dependable. You should depend only upon those things which are worthy of dependence. Not that dependence is wrong, but it is a mistake to depend upon those things on which you are not able to depend. You cannot depend on anything Samsaric because it would give way beneath your feet, as it were, but you can depend upon the Three Jewels because they will not let you down. So it's not that Buddhism is against dependence. It only insists that you find something on which you really and truly can depend in a positive manner. That is to say, in order that you may grow and develop and gain Enlightenment. Or if you like happiness. So this sort of dependence is equivalent say, to Going for Refuge. There is no Refuge to be found in anything mundane. True Refuge is only to be found in what is transcendental as embodied in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

So perhaps the difficulty comes about because we assume that dependence is always out of order; that dependence is never in order. Just like desire. If all desire is to be got rid of, all dependence is to be got rid of - but Buddhism doesn't say that. Buddhism says simply that you should not depend on those things which are not dependable, which let you down. But depend certainly on those things which don't let you down. That is to say the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Go for Refuge to them.

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Rosie Anderson: And is that the same for desire? That you desire the things which are transcendental rather than ...

S: Yes, one could say that. That neurotic desire is the desire for those things which cannot possibly give you happiness, whereas sensible desire is, you know, is desire for those things which really can give you happiness - genuinely positive states. Why should you not desire them. Of course you should.

Voice: It really seems to place importance on being a human being - it's only then that you can choose what's dependable and what isn't.

S: Hmm, yes.

Kay: Isn't desire attached to craving though? Couldn't you desire too much?

S: Well, there is such a thing as neurotic desire and neurotic desire must certainly be distinguished from desire in the sense of, well, let's say, positive desire - desire for that which is skilful. But some people do represent Buddhism as saying that all desire is to be eliminated, but Buddhism doesn't say that. The term one uses in this connection is Trsna which means thirst or craving. There is a term Chanda which corresponds more to desire in English, so there is a distinction between Kama-chanda and Dharma-chanda - desire for worldly things, you might say - for sense objects - and desire for the Dharma itself. The latter is to be cultivated.

(End of Side A)

S: ... elimination of desire. Well, Milarepa was making a big mistake. I think it's very important to think in terms of placing those positive dynamic human qualities at the service of the spiritual

life, rather than thinking the spiritual life consists in the elimination of all such things. It isn't a question of stamping out desire - well eliminate neurotic desire, certainly but if you stamp out desire, well, what on earth will you have left to do anything with or achieve anything with. You'd just be like a block of wood or a stone.

Anjali: Bhante, what's the difference between 'trsna' and 'chanda'?

S: Trsna which is in Sanskrit, Tanha in Pali, one might say is [185] essentially unskilful. The word is always used as meaning something unskilful. You can't say positive craving or positive thirst without a contradiction in terms, but the word 'chanda' - which I render as 'desire' is neutral. You can have a positive and a negative chanda. The negative chanda is called 'Kama-chanda'. You could say that is desire for pleasure, desire for mundane experience but then there's Dharma-chanda - desire for the Dharma itself. This is positive, this is to be cultivated.

Annie Fowler: That really makes it clear, because often I've read texts that just give you the total opposite impression, almost, to stamp out all these desires.

S: Yes, even the desire for Nirvana. Well, perhaps ultimately, yes (Laughter), because you no longer see Nirvana as a separate object to be attained but that is a quite different level - a different matter altogether.

Anjali: How do you spell Chanda?

S: C H A N D A. It's also sometimes translated as 'urge' - the urge for Dharma or the urge for Kama. I think it's very important to think of spiritual life in these dynamic terms as involving all one's positive energies. It's not a question of becoming more and more spiritual by progressive elimination of ones energies.

Anne F: It's more like incorporating them all.

S: Directing them, guiding them, just like riding a horse. You don't hamstring the horse. You let him gallop, but you guide him, you direct him on the right path. It's very much like that.

Vajrasuri: It's got a good quality of freedom - feel about it. Not reining yourself in - letting yourself out. (Laughter)

S: Letting yourself out to grass; kicking up your heels and frisking; kicking over the traces. (Loud laughter) The analogy could be continued. Letting out joyful neighs of (delight), not to speak of getting one's oats. (More loud laughter) But seriously, it's a much more positive way of thinking about the spiritual life, isn't it?

Vajrasuri: It has humour and light. (S: Right, certainly) (Laughs)

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Rosie Anderson: It just makes me realize how often we actually really misunderstand things and that we've got - I don't know if it is Christian conditioning - it really makes us ...

S: I think there's an element of gullibility. When we were talking this morning in the other group about translation and the difficulties some people have in understanding that the word is a translation of a word in another language and may not have exactly the same connotations. So some people, when they read, in a translation, say, of a Buddhist text - that the Buddha said: "All desire is to be eliminated", well they don't sort of ask themselves, "well what was the word in the original that is translated as desire?" They don't think, "well, does it seem sensible?" to eliminate desire. Well, what happened to the desire to develop itself? No. They don't raise those sort of

questions. They just take it, "well the translation said, or the Buddha said that desire is to be eliminated" - they take it quite literally. They never question it.

Voice: You find this kind of teaching in Krishnamurti. You're not to want anything at all.

S: Oh, Krishnamurti ties you into some beautiful knots.

Rosie A: We had quite a heated study group, I think on the subject of 'desire' recently and I didn't feel it was as though people were at all clear.

S: I think it helps if you go back to the original Pali. For instance, if you say that the Nidana which in the 12-fold chain, is sometimes translated as 'desire' is actually *tr̥sna* which means thirst or craving which is never used in a positive sense. That it is craving or it you like, neurotic desire which is to be eliminated but not desire itself. Well, then I think it becomes clear but if you're not really clear - suppose you start arguing what desire means in English instead of referring back to the word in Pali or Sanskrit - that the English word 'desire' is supposed to be translating.

Kay: Is there a dictionary that we could use?

S: The Oxford English Dictionary.

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Kay: Yes, but Pali.

S: Oh yes, there's the Pali Text Society, Pali-English Dictionary. Every community should have one. If anybody gets ordained, give her a Pali-English Dictionary. It's only about \$14. (Laughter) It should be a treasure of a lifetime. You'd be looking it up every day. It's very interesting, including little articles also some words are explained at such length that it's almost a little article.

Vajrasuri: Is it Pali-English, English-Pali?

S: It's Pali-English.

Voice: Who is it published by?

S: The Pali Text Society. I have 3 copies now!

Voice: Oh, do you want to give one away? (Laughter)

S: Well, the latest one was a present from one of the communities in London. I was quite happy to have a third copy. I've got two up here and one down in my flat in London. One (unclear) in Roman characters. I think one should develop this habit or practice of looking things up oneself - this enquiring mind. I think that's very necessary.

Kay: We do look in the English dictionary but it's never enough.

S: It isn't because if the word 'desire' is used in an English translation, to translate a Pali or Sanskrit word, it won't help you to look up all the different meanings of 'desire' in English, you see. It's only a very rough and ready equivalent. You have to, in the case of a key term like this, know the original Pali or Sanskrit term and exactly what it means and to what extent it can be translated (satisfactorily) by the word 'desire'. Otherwise, you can't understand. It's like uncritically accepting 'religion' as a translation of 'Dharma'. So if you forget all about the original word 'Dharma' and you discuss simply in terms of religion, the Buddha's 'religion', then the

question arises, "well in Buddhism there's no belief in God, but in religion you always believe in God. Religion involves belief in God so the Buddha taught a religion, how could the Buddha not have taught belief in God?"

All because you're taking uncritically 'religion' as a satisfactory equivalent for 'Dharma' . You see the confusions that arise? Just because people don't think clearly enough, don't enquire more.

Well where Sunyata is translated as 'nothingness', as Guenther [188] translates it, well you then start sort of reading the text in which this translation is used with the English connotations of 'nothingness' in your mind; not the connotations of the original Sanskrit word 'Sunyata'. At least for these key terms one must have some knowledge of the original - only maybe 10 or 12 of them which are really necessary - well, at the most 20 or a couple of dozen. If you are clear about these, it will save you a lot of trouble.

Annie Fowler: How do you know which one is meant from the translation if you haven't got the original? How are you going to know?

S: Well, some more conscientious translators put the original term, the key term, in brackets after the English word. Very good translators always do this or more scholarly translators. For instance, if you look in that new translation of the 'Vimalakirti Nirdesa', no, the one translated from the French, almost every other word has a Sanskrit word after it in brackets. You can tell exactly what the original is. You see what I mean? You can almost reconstruct the Sanskrit text - the translator's been so conscientious.

Dhammadinna: If you've got that kind of conscientiousness you could probably trust the translator to have looked up the word ...

S: Right, yes.

Dhammadinna: If you haven't you're in more trouble because ...

S: Another example is, for instance, 'Aryan' - is translated as 'noble'. So instead of asking yourself, 'Well, what does Aryan in Pali or Sanskrit really mean?', you read into 'noble' all the connotations that that word has in English. There you apply them to the Eightfold Path, etc. You see how it happens? We're just not sophisticated enough, so to speak, in terms of language and thought. A lot of discussion, quite unnecessary discussion, occurs just because people are not clear about these things, as I suspect was the case in that discussion you mentioned about 'desire'. If you'd only been there with your Pali-English Dictionary, you could have settled the matter. You could have hit them over the head with your dictionary. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: You'd need a Sanskrit dictionary as well.

S: Yes. There is a MacDonaldis Sanskrit Dictionary. It's down in the Sukhavati library. I don't have one up here. But we should have all these tools, as it were.

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Rosie Anderson: Do you think that Pali and Sanskrit are much richer languages than English?

S: Ooh! Sometimes they are in respect of psychological terms. Terms for states of mind and mental functions - in this field. In others, probably no - I think that others not. There are far far more words in English than there are in either Pali or even Sanskrit. But Pali is especially rich in terms for mental states and so on.

It depends on the genius of the language and the interests of the people. I was reading about

Arabic recently. Apparently in Arabic there are 500 different words for 'love'. So what does that tell you about the Arabs? (Laughter) See what I mean? And how careful you have to be about using the word 'love' when you are translating a text on that sort of subject from the Arabic. There'll be fine shades of meaning - differences - that you couldn't express in English. So many different kinds of love, in so many different situations, attitudes, contexts. We couldn't cope with that. For some reason they were especially interested in that sort of subject.

Rosie A: I think the Eskimos have 20 words for snow (Laughter)

S: (A race even) had 400 words for different kinds of snow.. The way it falls and the direction from which it falls.

Voice: It's really exciting, isn't it?

S: Yes, it is.

Voice: Expands your mind - looking in the dictionary.

S: Yes. Actually, it's one of the most interesting things that one can do - one of the most interesting ways of spending half an hour. Just looking through a dictionary, because language is much more developed and much more expressive than we usually have any idea of. We complain about not being able to express things in language: "oh! It's beyond language!" But that's a bit premature. We've by no means exhausted the possibilities of language, especially a rich language like English. We just need to learn it so much better and use it in a much better way.

Linda: I think saying there's so much you can't express in words, is a way of copping out from even trying, whereas if you learned to use the language better you could express far more than you do express now, even if there are certain things which can never be expressed.

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S: Yes. If you think how many times people use words like: 'nice', 'lovely', 'fantastic' - all hysteria-type of terms which really mean nothing at all any more.

Rosie Anderson: Sometimes I think we're afraid to use the other words. It's like a sort of group acknowledgement of certain words you use that are contemporary and you don't step out of that although you know the words.

S: Yes. It's what anthropologists call 'grooming'. You know, animals groom each other - they stroke and pick fleas out of each other and grunt. (Laughter) A lot of our conversation is like that using all the right reassuring words. You're really making noises with which you say, "I belong to the same group as you". You go sort of 'umph, umph' and he goes, 'umph, umph' (Laughter) Everything's OK. You belong to the same group, the same tribe. You use words like 'fantastic' and so does she! It's just like that in the Air Force during the War. They had their own language. They used to talk about 'wizard prangs' and (Laughter) So what did that mean? "I also belong to the Air Force!" You see? (Laughter) Jargon is a bit like that when used unthinkingly.

Voice: It's almost as though if you don't use that language, you're putting people down if you use a word they perhaps don't understand.

S: Yes. Yes, there is that sort of attitude too. You're being snobbish or elitist, actually using words that other people don't understand. Well, why not! You stretch them a little bit, especially if the particular word is the only word which really suits your meaning. Why should you not use it! Even if it is an unfamiliar word, like tintinnabulation (Laughter) or something like that, or antidisestablishmentarianism (Laughs) or 'honorificability tartitudinus' (Loud laughter)

Dhammadinna: We need a dictionary to ...

S: When I was a small boy I used to try out words like that on my aunt (gales of laughter). I was always consciously extending my vocabulary. I think one must do that.

Voice: What was the last word; can you explain the last word?

S: Ah, no. It was a Latin word which is actually used by [191] Shakespeare - 'honorificabilitudinitas' (Laughter) Better not ask me that, it'll take me even longer to explain.

Linda: Shakespeare is using it to point that [out] some people who use long words even take a few Roman ...

S: Right, that's true.

Linda: I think there's a danger, like in the 'Friends' we use certain words that have specific meanings like: 'friend' or 'friends' or 'reactive' which also have a meaning outside and I find that my vocabulary's very confused as a result in certain ways. (Laughter)

S: I think we have to be very aware to whom we're speaking.

Linda: I don't 'react' to anything in the community even if I am reacting. It's got such pejorative associations (Laughter). I 'respond' to everything instead. (Voices and Laughter)

S: We use this word 'relationship' in a very abstract sense. Some people say, "I think it's about time I had a relationship." (Laughter) There's no mention of any sort of person at the other end (Laughter) and after a few months you'll hear them say, "I've decided to give up my relationship." You haven't even heard the person's name mentioned. (Laughter)

Voice: I think it's really good to get, out of the circle of usual friends you have now, because you realize just how much jargon you do absorb.

S: Sometimes, it's all right to use words in a special sense, for special purposes but one must be very careful not to use them mechanically without really understanding what they mean; and even more careful not to go on using them outside the circle in which they're understood in that particular sense.

For instance, we use the word 'positive', don't we? We always use 'positive' today - well, positive what? (Laughter) And, yes, another one: I was jumping on them in India in the course of my tour - that is the English Friends - some of their expressions so often appears in the Newsletter: "We went and had a sit" - (Loud Laughter) In other words, "we went and sat for meditation". You see - "we went and had a sit" - Well, if you get expressions like this in the Newsletter, well, who is going to understand what on earth we are doing! (Lots of Laughter)

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(Tape change - inaudible humorous banter and laughter)

Linda: We have had the Friends (Unclear) people understand what we're talking about. (Laughter)

Greta: It's laziness, mixed with passivity.

S: It is laziness, yes. I'll give you another one in a minute. (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: I'm not particularly fond of that one: 'sit' because I hardly like to say 'meditate', because so often when I'm sitting it's hardly meditating and to say I'm meditating seems to elevate it past what it actually is. At least I am sitting! (Laughter)

S: And then there is 'practice'. Instead of saying, 'meditation practice', people often say, 'practice'. That isn't clear to people outside what you're talking about when you just say 'practice'. "He's very good at his practice." Practice of what? What kind of practice?

Linda: Actually it does confuse you because I remember being confused by the expression 'sit' when I telephoned someone and they said, "Oh, he's sitting" and I burst into fits of laughter because I thought either he was sitting on a clutch of eggs or he was having his portrait painted. (Loud laughter) He was meditating.

S: So they should have said, "he's sitting in meditation".

Linda: But the person who was answering the phone thought I was mad because I was just laughing because I just hadn't understood what he was saying.

Greta: You often get 'tied up', don't we? "Oh yes, he tied up at the moment". (Laughter and inaudible comments)

Dhammadinna: A Bondage Club!

S: But it really shows that people aren't aware sufficiently. They're not aware of the words that they're using; they're not aware of the meaning of those words or of what they're conveying or not conveying to the people to whom they are speaking. They're not even noticing the blank expression on their faces.

Anjali: Bhante, what's unclear about the word 'positive'? You said "positive what?".

S: Well, positive mental state, positive emotion ... we should [193] really say, usually I think - 'positive emotion' rather than just 'positive'. Instead of saying, "Well, she's feeling positive," well, "she is in an emotionally positive state".

Dhammadinna: Or even which one ... perhaps.

S: Well, it's better to say, yes, it's better to be more specific even. This is all rather slipshod, a slipshod expression. English as it should not be spoken.

Daphne: (It can actually help) to write things because when you're writing things down, you are more aware of using words you're not sure of the meaning of.

S: Yes, Right. Well, sometimes combing through the Newsletter for sort of jargon expressions, I usually find at least a handful or at least a few. I'm always getting on to the editor and contributors about it. (Pause) Anyway, time actually to - let's leave it there. We'll have something nice to finish with tomorrow morning. (Pause) 'Not forsaking the Dharma' - something suitable with which to conclude.
(End of Tape 18)

(Tape 19)

S: Halfway down page 20: Someone like to read that:

Dhammadinna: "Further in the 'Ratnavali' it is stated:

He who does not out of acquisitiveness, hatred, fear
And delusion forsake the Dharma,
Is called a man with the courage of his convictions;
He is an excellent vessel for ultimate good."

S: So this particular verse is concerned with reasons for which one might forsake the Dharma. One may forsake the Dharma out of acquisitiveness, out of hatred, out of fear, out of delusion, but if one doesn't do so, then, one "is called a man with the courage of his convictions" and such a person is "an excellent vessel for the ultimate good". Anyway the text goes on to explain this in detail, so we can go straight on to that:

Vajrasuri: "Here 'not to forsake the Dharma out of acquisitiveness' means not to renounce it from cupidity. For instance, someone might say: "I will give you lavish food, wealth, women and royalty, but you must forsake the Dharma.' Yet you will not renounce it."

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S: Does this sort of thing actually happen that people renounce the Dharma out of acquisitiveness? From cupidity? Can you imagine it happening? In any way? You are unlikely to have someone coming along and bribing you - that you'll be offered royalty and vast wealth if you forsake the Dharma - that's unlikely. But does the same sort of thing happen in other smaller ways?

Dhammadinna: Yes. You might decide to - you need some money so you get a job, then you get caught up in the job and the career and the money and you forget why - that you're earning the money for a particular reason, say.

Greta: Even on a more day to day basis, it might be really nice weather and people from the office are going out for a drink afterwards and you might decide not to go to study group ...

Annie Murphy: The World Service was reporting a Christian Sect that the general authorities were trying to stop. They were bribing the Buddhist refugees into going Christian, with food and clothing.

S: Oh, yes! This happened in Kalimpong. There were Christian Missionary groups when I was there - you know, well, I would call it bribery - trying to bribe and sometimes succeeding in bribing the Tibetan refugees.

Annie M: They were also offering to make them into American citizens and get them out of Cambodia.

S: Oh yes. (unclear) Here one is being distinctly bribed and if one does forsake the Dharma, well, it may be a bit hard to say it was out of acquisitiveness to people in that sort of desperate condition, but it is a test of one's faith in the Dharma. Well, one might ask oneself, "well, what would one do oneself under those conditions?" You might be tempted to (think) "well the thing to do is to get out of the country. Even if I become a Christian, what does it matter, I can revert to Buddhism once I've got into the United States." You could say or think something like that. It isn't easy to have the courage of one's convictions in a full sense.

I mean, in this country, we really haven't been put to the test, to any extent, have we? We haven't had to suffer any sort of persecution or even pressure, to give up Buddhism - only the very mildest kind of pressure - by friends or family or just general circumstances. But no one is actively really trying to induce us to give up the Dharma. [195] There is something a bit like this In India with the Ex-Untouchables because the Ex-Untouchables are classified as belonging to the scheduled caste, and the scheduled castes have reserved seats, for instance, in public services

and in higher education. But the central government has ruled that if you become a Buddhist, you cease to be a Hindu and therefore, cease to belong to the scheduled caste and you have to forfeit all your concessions - your reserved places and so on. So some people have not declared themselves as Buddhists for this reason. Others have become Buddhists, declared themselves as Buddhists, and have had to sacrifice all those advantages. So there is pressure on people who would want to become Buddhist or otherwise would have become. There's pressure from the central government to remain Hindu rather than become Buddhist so that you still continue to enjoy those material advantages, those educational advantages, or even political advantages. There's quite a big debate that goes on about this sort of thing among our Indian Buddhist Friends.

There's even a bit of a conflict in the government because the Maharashtra State government has continued to give those concessions to Ex-Untouchables even after converting to Buddhism. The State government has been much more understanding - the Central government has not been so understanding. (pause)

All right, who would like to read that next paragraph?

Voice: " 'Not to forsake the Dharma out of hatred' means not to renounce it from anger. Suppose someone has done me great harm and I have the opportunity of hurting him in return. Yet I will not forsake the Dharma (and retaliate)."

S: Hm. Here the line of approach is rather different isn't it? If someone has done you harm, or great harm and you have the opportunity of hurting him in return and if you do so, you have in effect given up the Dharma. You've forsaken the Dharma. You cease to be a Buddhist. That's quite interesting, isn't it?

Voice: What would be classed as great harm?

S: Well, what do you think might be great harm? "Has done you great harm". So clearly you've survived it. It couldn't be taking your life. I mean, robbed you; well, if you're a man, taken away your girlfriend or something of that sort. Taken your job. Maybe ridiculed you in public; maybe slandered you, yeah?

So if on that account, when you have the opportunity of harming that person, you actually take it, you have really forsaken [196] the Dharma. But you notice that hatred is singled out here. Even if you're a bit greedy and give way to greed, apparently you don't thereby forsake the Dharma in the full sense of ceasing to be a Buddhist. But if you deliberately retaliate, then you cease to be a Buddhist.

Don't forget that the text is written from a Mahayana point of view and any destruction of your affinity with other living beings, any breach of your positive attitude for other living beings means that you're really quite incapable of practising the Bodhisattva Ideal or following the Bodhisattva Ideal. So hatred in the Mahayana is usually regarded as being a much more serious matter than greed. This is a special Mahayana point of view.

Jenny: Is acquisitiveness not ... ?

S: Well, here acquisitiveness means acquisitiveness in the sense of succumbing to someone's attempt actually to bribe you to forsake the Dharma. If it's just indulgence in greed, like overeating or even perhaps, on might say, stealing, you don't forsake the Dharma in the sense of almost officially giving up Buddhism, in the same way that you forsake the Dharma when you do take advantage, deliberately take advantage, of an opportunity of retaliating on someone who has done you great harm.

Voice: Does that mean that to deal like in law - be a lawyer or a judge - would be inconsistent with Buddhism. Because ... (unclear) ...

S: It could be. I mean, this is an interesting point because according to the Theravada, according to Theravada Vinaya, a monk cannot be a witness in a law case in case somebody as a result of his evidence is sentenced and sent to prison and thereby punished. That's quite an interesting point. You can't be a party to the infliction of harm or injury on anyone, even if from a legal point of view or even ethical point of view that is justified.

Glynis: Some people were called up for jury service recently. Diana was one of them and she found it very strange being expected to say guilty or not guilty.

Voice: Do you have to go?

Greta: You can be exempt in certain instances.

S: I don't know if you can be excused from jury service on conscientious grounds. I'm not sure of that. Presumably you can.

Kay: I just put religious grounds. It was all right. I didn't have to go.

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S: But on the other had, you could say, well, if you do accept to serve on a jury, you could perhaps help to modify what otherwise might have been a rather outrageous attitude on the part of the jury. I mean, perhaps all the other jurors would have been in favour of finding someone guilty and you might feel well, the person wasn't - well, at least not fully guilty and should not be exposed to a specially harsh penalty because he had been found guilty.

Of course, it could work the other way round. They might be inclined to let somebody off who you felt really ought to be made aware, let us say, that he had committed a very unskilful action. I mean, punishments are not any longer really savage. I mean there are many fines.

Supposing you are a member of a jury which is trying a man, say, for manslaughter as a result of drunken driving. Something like that. Well, supposing, let us say for the sake of argument, that everyone else on the jury was a motorist and inclined to let him off rather lightly. You might not be so inclined. You might think, well, a heavy fine or even a short period of imprisonment would be a proper ethical consequence of his reckless behaviour and make people more aware of the seriousness of the offence of drunken driving. If you opt out of the jury system, you also opt out of the exercise of power. Do you see what I mean? And that makes you leave power in the hands of those who perhaps are less ethically conscious than you are yourself.

I think that's the great danger if you opt out of jury service and you opt out of voting and you opt out of everything if a civic and collective and public nature. Well, it means in effect that you just leave the wicked world to its own devices. Well, some people may genuinely make that choice. I mean thinking that they're better occupied devoting themselves entirely to rebuilding at least a nucleus of something better but others may feel, well, they should try to exercise some skilful influence outside in the world itself. One can't say that one is right and the other is wrong. People have to make their individual choices. (Pause)

But certainly, according to the Mahayana, anger and hatred are far more serious offences than greed and craving because they cut you off from beings so much more. The Mahayana says, well, through greed and craving even if they are unskilful, at least you are brought into contact with other beings. But in the case of anger and hatred, well, it just cuts you off from other beings.

Marion: Would you say that there was any difference between anger and hatred?

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S: Yes. I'd personally draw a distinction. Hatred I'd regard as far more extreme and unskilful than anger. Anger is the sort of energy that seeks to break through obstacles. When you become, you don't necessarily want to do anybody any harm. You just want to get something out of the way. Or break through some obstacle. But hatred means you have this quite deliberate, or you make a quite deliberate attempt, or it involves a quite deliberate attempt, or it involves the wish to inflict actual harm, damage and suffering on other living beings.

Marion: Is the energy that comes from anger still based on a negative state of mind?

S: No, I wouldn't necessarily say so, because you can get angry when you are frustrated in doing something good. But if you were to allow that anger to develop into hatred, well, that would be unskilful. Some people claim to perform quite skilful actions while they're angry because there's so much energy there, but you have to be very careful because anger can easily pass over into hatred, if frustration is sustained. (Pause) You might be really angry that someone's just getting in your way and frustrating your efforts and that anger builds up, and it may just make you all the more determined to do what you've set out to do despite that opposition. But if it was to turn into hatred, you'd want actually to kill or somehow destroy the people who were frustrating your efforts. So I think there's quite a difference between anger and hatred.

Voice: Some people can get so angry it becomes hatred.

S: Oh yes, it passes into hatred. Well, it is hatred then; if you want to destroy those who are opposing you then that is hatred. It is no longer anger. Hatred is something more fixed and deliberate and conscious. And then of course there's the more extreme form, of malice. Malice is sort of gratuitous hatred. You hate you want to destroy or you want to cause suffering to or even to torture someone who has not actually done you any harm at all. That is malice: that you may be so full of hatred that you are prepared to take it out on anybody. You don't care any longer if it's the original person who offended you. Anybody will do. The hatred is so powerful. So that becomes malice. You may even no longer remember what it was that originally made you first angry and then full of hatred. You may just have this sort of tendency to malice and to sadism and so on. That is a very extreme and unpleasant form [199] of unskilful and obviously completely un-Bodhisattva-like or anti-Bodhisattva-like (state?)

Daphne: I don't quite understand how anger can arise from a skilful state of mind, because when you're angry, you're somehow always kind of out of touch with yourself to some extent, aren't you?

S: Well, no. I wouldn't say that. I would say that you can be very much in touch with yourself when you're angry. I mean, sometimes it's very difficult to tell where sort of energy passes over into anger. You may be doing something really energetic and then there's a bit of opposition and there may be a touch of anger there. So you call up fresh reserves of energy to break through that opposition. Anger is more like that. You don't actually want to do any particular person any harm.

Daphne: Can you not find there's a tendency to actually project it on to somebody?

S: To take it out of somebody?

Greta: Someone might genuinely make one angry.

S: Well, to the extent that one can be made angry. They're the occasion of your anger, rather than

your cause.

Greta: I always find those situations quite difficult to deal with because I'm never quite sure whether to say how I'm feeling then or what often happens, is two days later - to come along and say, "You really made me angry then". It seems kind of cold and the moment has been lost.

S: Well, no doubt there is a difference between giving expression to one's anger on the spot and acknowledging or confessing on the spot that you feel angry. (Pause) But I think what you're thinking of is more like irritation than anger. See what I mean?

You've really had a bad day and maybe you were cooking something that burned or someone left the tap running in the bathroom and the water had all overflowed and you feel a bit irritated. Then the children come in a bit noisy and you sort of snap at them. You see? That's more like irritation. You know, the frustration you feel when things have just been going wrong, you know, one after another. I think that is unskilful but it certainly doesn't amount to hatred. It's just irritation. A sort of diffuse sense of frustration and irritability.

Greta: Do you think, Bhante, that it's 'better' to give expression [200] to one's anger at the time - that one is feeling angry or to wait?

S: Well, it depends on the circumstances. If it's a particular person involved, well you have to try to see which is the most skilful or more skilful method in regard to that person. Some people are very scared of anger. Do you see what I mean? If you actually were to say, "Well look, I'm feeling really angry with you" that might really sort of shock them. They might not be able to take it. But I mean there are other people who can handle anger. They're not upset to be told that someone is actually feeling angry with them there and then. Do you see what I mean? You have to take the type of person that you're dealing with into consideration too, as well as your own feelings.

It may really be bad for you to postpone telling, which you know from experience that you're just sort of completely upset for a couple of days. So you have to just weigh one thing against another. Well, which is better? To sort of really shock that particular person perhaps by saying that you're actually angry with him or her or to make things a bit uncomfortable for yourself by sitting on the anger and postponing telling for a couple of days until you've calmed down a bit. It's not always easy to tell. And sometimes, you're not in a very calm, judicious, impartial sort of mental state anyway. It also depends whether you're going to be continuing to be with that person for the next two or three days.

It could be that you postpone telling them and they sort of vaguely feel there's something wrong, that you're not your usual self. So maybe it's better in that sort of case to have it over with quickly, rather than be sort of sulking as it were, for two or three days. D.H. Lawrence used to maintain, rightly or wrongly, that in the case of married people it was much better to explode on the spot, you know, rather than wait even five minutes. So he was always having it out with his wife and she was always having it out with him. (Laughter) Sometimes it meant that pots and pans were flying quite literally. Well, some people prefer that way of life. (Laughter)

Voice: He used to beat her up too.

S: I'm not so sure about that. I mean she was a big woman ... (words lost in laughter) Well, he might have given her the odd thump.

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Linda: Oh they were quite famous for it. There are famous descriptions of it. That's why they couldn't have - that's one of the reasons it was so difficult to for people to live with the

Lawrences around because they would very often fly at each other.

S: You'd be dodging the pots and pans all the time. I think it must be really dreadful to live with a married couple, you know, that have got that sort of relationship. I've seen it in the case of a few couples. It's really dreadful. It's really so negative, when they've got into that sort of rut. I don't even want to think about it. (Laughter) I hope I never find myself in that situation. (Loud Laughter)

Anyway, let's move on to fear.

Daphne: " 'Not to forsake the Dharma out of fear' means not to renounce it from terror. For instance, someone might threaten: 'If you do not forsake the Dharma, I shall order three hundred soldiers daily to cut five ounces of flesh from your body.' Yet you will not renounce it."

S: Well you really would be a hero or heroine, indeed. It's really quite frightful to contemplate that sort of eventuality. I just hope none of us have to (suffer) that.

Linda: It's extraordinary - if you take the Dharma as being over all those thousands of years - with somebody perhaps studying - different parts of it may be relevant to different climes. They could be reading that and it could be describing exactly their situation.

S: Yes, indeed! Do you think there's any actual analogy to that in our actual experience - that we're in danger of forsaking the Dharma, out of fear? Even to a slight extent? In this sort of vein? As a result of some external threat?

Marion: I remember at the LBC, quite a lot (words lost in laughter).

S: Has anyone ever threatened to beat you up unless you gave up Buddhism or something like that?

Marion: There was somebody that someone in Sukhavati told to get out of the grounds and his father came and punched him on the nose ...

S: I daresay, he'd remember that ...

Linda: I wonder if something like the National Front or some other group decided to pick on Buddhists in the same way that they might [202] pick on some other social group as a target for their vindictiveness, and persistently broke the shop windows or found out where the communities were and set fire to them and things like that - it seems quite a sort of random violence ...

S: I can't imagine anyone actually giving up the Dharma, although they might move to another area. (Pause) I mean, in Archway, we used to have stones coming through the windows, while we were meditating ... usually small boys about 11 or 12.

Dhammadinna: Some were bigger than that: 17 or 18 - bigger stones ...

Greta: We were discussing that over tea this morning - the idea that when people first start meditating, maybe all goes well - you know, they don't come across any hindrances and they meditate away, and after they've got into it - after they've been meditating for a while, they are quite afraid of the things which are emanating from inside them (S: That's right!) and need a lot of encouragement, and if that encouragement isn't forthcoming, then they may forsake the Dharma, albeit maybe temporarily.

S: Yes. I do know that this has happened, sometimes. There's an internal, rather than an external threat, in this case.

Paula: There's also the fear of people who are just getting into Buddhism, being different from their usual circle of friends (S: Yes)

Dhammadinna: And being persuaded to give it up ...

S: These are subtler forms of pressure.

Vajrasuri: Sometimes those subtler forms of pressure are more difficult to resist - more fearsome ...

Annie Fowler: I think parental pressure is a form of ... like in my own case, I do make my mother unhappy by being a Buddhist and so you know, it's quite difficult. I mean, I'm not going to forsake the Dharma because of that but it's quite a difficult situation.

S: I've known people to be cut out of their parents' wills because they were Buddhists.

Annie F: Well, she's threatened to do that! (Laughs)

S: There was one case in which someone sort of was asked to promise that if he was left some money in somebody's will, he wouldn't spend it on the FWBO and he didn't feel able to make that promise.

Annie F: What's this 'forsake the Dharma'? Is it forever?

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S: That does seem to be the suggestion that you sort of abandon the Dharma, not that you just fail to practise it properly. This is why it seems all the more serious that retaliation constitutes forsaking the Dharma. It's as though you have to start all over again after that - it's such a serious matter: retaliating against other living beings, when you got no (?), - that if you do that, well, you really have forsaken the Dharma. It's as though you've got to be converted to Buddhism all over again ... after proper repentance ...

Annie F: What about defending yourself - say what about a new eventuality came up and people from the National Front starting beating people up would you get accept being beaten up?

S: Well, could one defend oneself without sort of doing harm to others?

Linda: I think it would depend on your frame of mind at the time. I don't think you can actually rule - you can maybe fantasize what you'd like to do but until it actually happens, you can't tell.

S: I personally feel, - I certainly try to prevent people injuring or attacking me and if in the course of doing that I just happen to hurt someone, without intending to do so, well, I wouldn't feel any sort of pangs of conscience about it afterwards. - I'd say, frankly. But I wouldn't sort of deliberately sort of inflict any suffering on anybody if I just happen to do so, as it were, in defending myself, I wouldn't blame myself afterwards. I'd say, "well really, that was really their fault. My conscience is clear!"

Well supposing you're a woman and you're practising the art of self-defence and someone tries to rape you, so your art of self-defence comes into play and you sort of brush him aside or even knock him over - well if he happens to break his neck, without your having intended to do that (Laughter), well, that's too bad! Don't feel guilty about it. If you were just using, as far as you

could tell, sufficient force merely to repel the attack. He should just not have put himself in that position in the first place. If on the other hand you get so angry that you want to do him the maximum damage, then you are at fault. (Laughter) Yeah? But not otherwise. (pause) All right, let's go on, a bit more.

Voice: " 'Not to forsake the Dharma out of delusion' means not to renounce it from stupidity. Suppose, someone argues: 'Neither Karma, its results nor the Three Jewels are true. What is the use [204] of your practising the Dharma? Renounce it.' Yet you will not do so."

S: This seems to be the commonest I would say: (Repeats above quote) Ah, so sometimes people's faith, so to speak, is disturbed by doubts either as propounded by other people, maybe outside the Movement, non-Buddhists, or even within their own minds - arising within their own minds. You can sometimes forsake the Dharma out of delusion. I mean, some people come in contact with the Dharma and they get on all right with it for a while but then delusion creeps in. Some different aspect or (?) of the Dharma, they just find it a bit impossible to accept. They're just unable to understand it.

Vajrapushpa: And also perhaps, they don't have faith in their own experience - what they have already experienced ...

S: Yes, indeed, right. They might, you know, have had a really good meditation, really positive, blissful. Then a few days later, they've managed to convince themselves, well, "it was just a sort of delusion, just a sort of hallucination", as it were - you know, something of that sort. They just hypnotized themselves. "It wasn't really real."

Annie Murphy: You make the point, as far as I remember, very much emphasize, that at the beginning of the Eightfold Path, don't you: never to forget that vision or that insight that you have very early on or if it occurs again - try to make a point of remembering it.

S: Yes. I mean one of the things that has struck me, dealing with comparatively ordinary people in the course of my contact with the Friends - bearing in mind that we don't really have many absolute geniuses or anything like that - but quite a lot of people have quite extraordinary experiences of one kind or another. I mean, in the course of their spiritual lives - i.e. in the course of their meditation or in some other way. But it's very very easy to forget those experiences. I mean, you might have an extraordinarily good, say, meditation retreat and be really in another world for 10 days or a fortnight but you know, after six months you could have completely forgotten it and you could almost, you know, cease to believe in the value of meditation or that meditation even was at all possible. You're so out of touch with your own original experience, you've lost it. You can hardly remember what it was like, especially if you've been through various difficulties or had to face various distractions since then. It's just like a dream that you had, it's all gone, it's forgotten.

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So one should cherish, so to speak, one's past experiences, without hanging on to them or anything like that but remind yourself that all these things have happened. "I have had an experience of the Dharma. I have had a glimpse of vision. I'm not completely in the dark." Do you see what I mean? Sometimes some people keep diaries and journals and sometimes it's quite instructive just to go back and refresh one's memory. Sometimes even in the case of ordinary diaries and journals, more mundane ones, you can hardly believe that that was you, you know, going through all that or feeling that or thinking that. It's quite an eye-opening kind of experience. And it's much the same way, more positively, if you kept a retreat journal or meditation diary. You'd think, "Well, I really experienced quite a lot. I went through quite a lot of positive experiences". Just refresh your memory and recapture your vision.

Marion: In a way, it's relating to those experiences as being more real than the mundane ones.

Rosie Ong: Sometimes you can see yourself changing over a period of time.

S: Well, yes, if you've been a confirmed diary keeper and have kept a diary for years upon end, you can really see the changes. I don't know if anybody does keep a diary. I think most of you don't have time. (few mumbles in reply) I'm not suggesting that you're not busy, just well organized.

Greta: I kept one for three months when I was in India, during which I made quite a lot of decisions about what I was going to do when I returned and it was quite a force to make me get on with those changes, and some of them are quite mundane about how many hours to work and what to do. It was very useful.

S: I kept a diary on my Indian tour recently, not very full, but to remind me of things in case I wrote something which I hadn't actually done, which might be interesting. I'd have forgotten all those details (just keep the thread) of all the places I'd visited and all the people I'd met and the lectures I'd gave and being (few words unclear - laughter) All that sort of thing, yeah? And the day we spent practically the whole day in travelling when the journey should have only taken four hours. And the day we were stranded, for hours on end ... we were all dusty and dirty waiting in a few stalls, you know, they were just by the wayside, in the middle of nowhere. Just sitting in that incredibly dirty little tea-shop, drinking cups of tea and coffee - watching a man [206] making Indian sweetmeats with his big dirty hands (Laughter), right into all the stuff dripping with dust (words lost in laughter) ... putting them into the bubbling vial which was in a pot on a little fire by the side of the road, with all the dust coming into it and bugs sort of sticking in it (Laughter) (more words lost in loud laughter) That's India! The Indian Friends and Order Members, they were just sitting nonchalantly down, having a cup of tea. The English Order Members getting very irritated. The difference was quite noticeable. Walking up and down and going and doing things and trying to make phone calls (Laughter) and the Indians sitting around and just having tea, not especially bothered about anything ...

Anyway, let's go on a little bit more:

Rosie Ong: "Thus he who proves his confidence under these four conditions is called a man with the courage of his convictions; and he is an excellent vessel for the realization of ultimate good."

S: So we're still concerned with faith, by the way, and these are just four conditions, under which faith may be tested. So if you pass the test, if your faith survives these four conditions, you can be called a man, or a woman, with the courage of his or her convictions. And he, or she, "is an excellent vessel for the realization of the ultimate good." All right, carry straight on:

Rosie Ong: "When these three kinds of confidence are present, infinite benefits arise: the attitude of an excellent man is formed; the unfavourable conditions are given up; the senses are keen and bright; ethics and manners are not violated; emotional instability is overcome; the realm of Mara is transcended; the path of liberation is gained; extensive merits are accumulated; many Buddhas are seen; there is the support of the Buddhas and other such inconceivably positive qualities are acquired. So also in the 'Ratnolka-namadharani':

The attitude of great men is developed
When one has confidence in the Victorious One and in His Dharma
In the life and work of the Sons of the Buddha
And in unsurpassable enlightenment."

S: So when these three kinds of confidence are present, that is to say, the trusting confidence or

faith, the longing and the lucid, in other words when faith is fully present in all its forms, all its aspects, infinite benefits arise. "The attitude of an excellent man is formed" - as if to say, well, you're really and truly a human being. "The unfavourable conditions are given up" - hmm? It's not quite clear whether it's unfavourable conditions in the sense of external conditions or unfavourable mental states. It could be both. "And the sense are keen and bright". That's interesting, [207] isn't it? "The senses are keen and bright", as a result of your faith. How do you think that is? (Pause) Well, you're much more alive, you're full of emotional positivity, yes? That affects the way you see things, the way you hear, the way you smell things. Your senses even, are keen and bright, not dull.

Rosie Ong: Quite often that is a mark of an enlightened person, isn't it? (You come up to someone and say) 'your senses are keen and bright' (in particular) ... (S: Yes, yes, that's true) I thought that was mostly due to their heightened awareness.

S: Well, heightened emotional positivity and faith, of course, is one of the most positive of the positive emotions. And presumably if you're filled with faith, your senses are clear and bright, your eyes sparkle, etc. You're just much more alive. "Ethics and manners are not violated". You notice Guenther translates, 'ethics and manners' - because he points out quite rightly that 'sila' which we usually translates as 'ethics' or 'morality' traditionally includes the sort of thing, that in modern times being concerned under the heading of ethics and good manners. That's quite significant. You could say, for the Buddhist traditionally, good manners are a part of ethics, because the essence of good manners is consideration for other people, huh? It's not, you know, a question of airs and graces, and you know, gestures and flourishes, it's just consideration for other people.

(End of Side A)

The question of emotional instability - emotional instability occurs only when there's a supposition of emotional conflicts. And positive and negative emotions are struggling with each other for dominance. But if faith is really strong, then there's no emotional instability.

"The realm of Mara is transcended" - the realm of unskilful activities, so to speak. "The path of liberation is gained - through confidence, through faith, you know, access to the transcendental path itself. "Extensive merits are accumulated" - a lot of punya is accumulated because of all the good deeds that you've performed out of your faith.

"Many Buddhas are seen" - this can be taken in two senses - that is in the course of your numberless lives as a Bodhisattva, you have an opportunity of actually seeing many Nirmanakaya Buddhas and observing their lives and hearing their teaching. Or, "Many Buddhas are seen" could mean that you have visions of Buddhas in your meditation. "There is the support of the Buddhas and other such inconceivable positive qualities are acquired". So you're supported by [208] the Buddhas, well, because as you practise the Dharma, the Dharma supports you. As you have faith in the Buddha, the Buddha, so to speak, has faith in you. The Buddha supports you. You come more closely into contact with the Buddha. You feel the Buddha's presence, you feel a sort of blessing from the Buddha. "And other inconceivably positive qualities are acquired". All of these are acquired from confidence, from faith in this Buddhistic sense. (Pause)

So 'the attitude of great men is developed, when one has confidence in the Victorious One and in His Dharma. in the life and work of the Sons of the Buddha - Sons of the Buddha meaning the Bodhisattvas - 'And in unsurpassable enlightenment'. So one can see that faith really is the Wish-fulfilling Tree or the Wish-fulfilling Gem. Everything comes from faith in this sense, I must emphasize. Not faith in the sense of belief. (pause)

Vajrasuri: That translates into the Three Jewels, doesn't it?

S: Yes. Would you like to read on: - to the end.

Dawn: "Further, when there is confidence, the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, come near and teach him the Dharma. As is stated in the Bodhisattva-pitaka:

Thus when the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, have recognized a Bodhisattva with the courage of his convictions as a worthy vessel for the Buddhadharmas, they approach and teach him the way of a Bodhisattva.

In this way, the precious human body, which presents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture, and the human mind possessing three kinds of confidence, are the individual or the working basis for the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment."

S: Hmm. "Further, when there is confidence" - or faith - "the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, come near and teach him the Dharma. As is stated in the Bodhisattva-pitaka: Thus when the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, have recognized a Bodhisattva with the courage of his convictions as a worthy vessel for the Buddhadharmas, they approach and teach him the way of a Bodhisattva." So in the case of such Bodhisattvas, it's the Buddhas that approach them.

But what is the general spiritual principle involved here?

Voices: Kalyana Mitra ... His activity (S: Yes)

Marion: When you reach a certain level of development you can take (the advanced stage?) ...

S: Not just that. It's as though, when you reach a certain level [209] or when you're ready or prepared for something, it's almost as though - by the operation of some mysterious law - well, what you need will come to you.

Marion: Do you think that always happens?

S: I think it does. Not that you sit and wait. You do everything that you can and yes, it comes to you, if you do your bit. It, so to speak, will do its bit.

Greta: It's like the way with the Bodhicitta.

S: Yes, yes. If you do everything that you, by way of the reciting of the Seven-fold Puja, well, the Bodhicitta will come to you.

Rosie Ong: It's like setting a match in a place where there's lots of wood. You just set the match, and it just flares up.

S: You must do everything that you can - and that may involve quite a lot - (Laughter). I mean, for instance, there are several stories in this connection: There is the story about the Tibetan Lama - he was a very good Lama - and in a way, he needed disciples, but he didn't have any disciples. He couldn't attract anybody. So he went to see his Guru and asked what he should do about it? And the Guru said, "Oh forget about disciples. I'll give you a little practice that will be good for you." He said, "everyday, feed 20 or 30 dogs." So the disciple really couldn't understand this the Dalai Lama, so to speak; so, anyway, he thought, "well, this is what the Master tells me. I'd better do it." So he used to collect food and he was feeding 20 or 30 dogs. So this went on for years and years. The dogs got to know him, and would come every day, wagging their tails for the food when it was arriving. But of course, well, there were hundreds of dogs and they were well looked after. They really started liking the Lama obviously. But anyway, dogs, are not so long-lived as human beings, so after 5 years, 6 years, 8 or 10 years, well, they'd all die. But

having died, they'd be reborn. On account of their connection with the Lama, they were reborn as human beings - in the houses and the villages round about. And when they grew up and became young men, well, they started feeling drawn towards the Lama (Laughter). In the end they became his disciples. You see what I mean? (Laughter) So the disciples came to him - in the end he got what he needed, but he'd had to do quite a lot to bring that state of affairs about. It made him do quite a lot, that he hadn't understood really the connection between the cause and the effect. He wasn't as wise as his own Guru. But anyway, he did get the disciples he needed. And he was then able to teach them.

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You haven't heard this story before? No? I thought I'd told it quite a number of times before.

Daphne: Is it possible to try too hard? I heard this criticism used of people.

S: Try too hard? ... Well there is this parable about Sona Kolivisa. You know, and the Buddha told him the parable of the lute. You can try too hard in the sense of putting too much effort into something in the wrong sort of way. In the way we usually call 'forced' or 'wilful'. It's almost with an angry sort of attitude. You try to meditate with the attitude of "why shouldn't I be able to meditate! Why shouldn't I be able to get into those dhyanas!" (words lost in laughter) I mean, if you are meditating in that sort of spirit, well that is sort of wilful and forced. You won't get very far. Certainly, I don't think it's possible to put too much energy or effort into anything spiritual, but you can [put] energy into something in the wrong sort of way. Or you can be thinking, deceiving yourself that you're putting energy into something, when you're not doing that at all. You're just giving way to your feelings of frustration, irritation and resentment and so on.

In a way, you can't put too much energy into the spiritual life, but is that really what you're doing? That is the question.

Daphne: As far as your attention goes, we know that if you keep doing it, even if you're doing it in a bad sort of way, surely eventually ...

S: Yes, indeed. But not if you're getting irritated and impatient, because then in fact you're not putting energy into meditation.

Anyway, "in this way, the precious human body, which presents a unique occasion and effects a right juncture, and the human mind possessing three kinds of confidence, are the individual or the working basis for the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment."

So in that way, Gampopa summarizes quite neatly the whole chapter. Sometimes all these sort of sub-divisions and definitions, endanger losing sight of the wood for all those trees. But the concluding paragraph, helps you just to see the whole thing in perspective. All sort of laid out, systematically before you.

So, it's really clear that, for those who have 'the precious human body which presents a unique occasion and effects the right juncture and the human mind' - well the most important thing you can do - at this stage at least - is just to develop faith: faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Act accordingly and go on from [211] there - expanding outwards more and more. It's rather interesting that in as much as in the quotation it says; "Thus when the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, have recognized a Bodhisattva with the courage of his convictions" etc. "they approach and teach him the way of a Bodhisattva". And what is the next chapter? It's 'Meeting Spiritual Friends', yeah? And for most people, a Buddha would be a bit too much for. Even an advanced Bodhisattva would be a bit too much for them. So this is why the text itself says that for us it's best to have a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being. We can get along with that. Even that is sometimes a bit difficult - just to accept what your ordinary Kalyana Mitras say.

One day, maybe, you'll be ready to meet the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. But in the meantime, it's just a question of meeting with spiritual friends. And that's the next chapter.

Rosie Ong: Would you like to say something about Amitabha? It seems a bit like that waiting - and doing - Not so much like Amitabha's vow that if you just believe in him, you just let yourself be carried away.

S: Well, it isn't belief in him, in the Western, especially Western Christian sense - it isn't a question of 'believing in Amitabha' instead of believing in Jesus - No. They're not really (comparable). I mean, the Sutras dealing with Amitabha as God, are really concerned with the consequences, so to speak, of this very emotionally positive spiritual attitude which in this text is summed up as faith.

I have said in the Survey that it's as though faith in that sort of context, is just really the emotional equivalent of wisdom. It's not just blind belief or anything like that. It's not just wishful thinking; it's not just gullibility. So faith in Amitabha is not just believing, that, well, if you believe in Amitabha, everything will be all right. It's this total emotional response to the ideal of Buddhahood which is so powerful as to completely transform your life. This is what the text is really concerned with. This is what the Happy Land Sutras are really concerned with. It's not belief - I think we must be really careful not to think of it in those terms. It isn't belief that in his previous life as the (Monk Avankata), this is what happened. It's not believing in that myth it's not literally believing in it, but it's rather a question of our own total emotional response to the ideal of Buddhahood, presented in an aesthetically appealing form, in an aesthetically appealing setting, i.e. Amitabha in the midst of the Happy Land. [212] Backed by his two Bodhisattvas and surrounded by all those jewel trees and garlands and golden railings and all the rest of it. You can change that if you like - if you'd rather have more natural scenery.

Rosie Ong: Padmaloka in the last ten days!

S: Ah, yes, right! Next time you come you might even find a great big Amitabha Buddha image . We have got ideas of that sort. We haven't quite decided what image, but we'd like to have a really big image. However, I'm not being competitive, but even bigger than the ones at Sukhavati! (Laughter)

Vajrasuri: The shrine room will be outside.

S: The other biggest barn we hope eventually to convert. (Pause) Anyway, let's leave it on that auspicious note. Yes, I did say something to the other group which I'll repeat here: about oneself taking a lead in study groups, in the sense that some of you at least, may find yourself, sometime or other, leading a study group on this material. You may well feel that having gone through it in this way, on this occasion, you're quite able to lead a study group a weekly study group or whatever, on this particular text. Sometimes people very often do that and this is very good, but there's just one little word of warning. I've sometimes found that when people do this, they sort of lead the study, just by first of all reading out the text and then reading out their notes on that, the notes they took, say, on the occasion of the original retreat. But that isn't really good enough. You see what I mean? Sometimes this restricts the study too much. So what one should do rather is refresh one's memory beforehand by not only going through the text but through one's notes as well and then with that all in one's mind, in the back of one's mind, then take the study. Without trying to follow exactly the pattern of discussion we had. You will be with quite different people in a different situation, so draw on your notes by all means and bear them in mind but don't simply read out your notes after somebody has read out the relevant section from the text. That has happened and it does make the study much too rigid and much too wooden so you shouldn't plan to do it in that sort of way. Just draw on whatever the material reads in the course of these ten days, and bring it in, yes, hopefully, where appropriate but don't insist on just reading out

your notes [213] to everybody, thinking that that is a study group.

All right, let's leave it there then for the time being.

Voices: Thank you very much!

(end of tape 19 - end of seminar)

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